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ABSTRACT

This paper provides a skeleton of a one-year course in Asian and African civilizations intended for upper school students. The curricular package consists of four parts. The first part deals with the basic shape and content of the course as envisioned. The remaining three parts develop a specific unit on classical India with a series of teacher notes, a set of student readings that can be used according to individual needs, and a prose narrative of content with suggestions for extension and inclusion. (EH)

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Course Description, Topical Outline, and Sample Unit

Submitted for

The Klingenstein Seminar
(TA5587)

Professor Pearl R. Kane

By

Richard A. Beaton

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Acknowledgments

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Introduction

What follows is a work in progress: the skeleton of a one year course in Asian and African Civilizations intended for Upper School students. The course has not actually been taught yet so the ideas and materials remain theoretical. It is ambitious in what it hopes to accomplish, but I believe it can be done. Various of the Klingenstein Fellows have read portions of what follows. Offering useful suggestions which are incorporated into the final product, they seemed to think that the course is on the right track. The Humanities are emphasized throughout the course. History as such plays more of a secondary role in the first semester; it looms larger in the second which concentrates on more recent developments. In the hope of engaging more active involvement from students, the course draws upon a significant number of excerpts from primary sources, permitting students to think about issues for themselves rather than in some predigested form. With the same intent, the course incorporates a variety of visual and audio-visual resources: slides, posters, videotapes, and representative artifacts. In general, I plan to use these to introduce new concepts rather than as follow-up materials, eliciting student reactions and interpretations before (and after!) they have done more formal study. A partial list of specific resources and suppliers is included in the Teachers Notes section.

The curricular package which follows consists of four parts. The first part deals with the basic shape and content of the course as it is envisioned at present. This includes a prose Course Description which is followed by a set of Broad Themes and a set of Key Questions. I believe that these will provide an element of continuity between and within civilizations which will facilitate student comprehension of the rich variety of approaches to human existence that these civilizations represent. A reasonably detailed Topical Outline of the course follows. At intervals, the course considers modern phenomena as approximate parallels to developments being studied; these are marked with a triple asterisk (***). The inclusion of such phenomena provides an opportunity for students to reflect on what they have learned, internalizing the past by thinking of it in terms of contrasts and comparisons with the present, making better sense of other civilizations by thinking about them relative to our own. A list of possible student projects follow the Outline.

The remaining three parts of this curricular package develop a specific unit within the curriculum, namely Classical India. Given its enormous emphasis on spirituality and the complexity of that spirituality over time and between Hindu, Jain, and Buddhist variations, I felt that teachers and students both might feel somewhat overwhelmed in the abstract. The unit consists of a prose narrative of content, a series of Teacher Notes (TN), and a set of Student Readings (SR) which can be mixed and matched according to individual needs. The narrative could be used as a background information source for teachers and/or students; individual sections might serve as the basis for a teacher's own notes and/or as supplemental student reading assignments. The Teacher Notes relate to specific assignments from the Student Readings. In some cases, they expand upon the assignment; in some cases, they explain allusions which might not be readily comprehensible; in most cases, they suggest ways of using the assigment to spark discussion and reflection. The narrative indicates the moments in the unit where the TN and SR seem most appropriate although, again, teachers need not be limited by this.

As suggested above, the choice of Classical India as a sample was deliberate. Rightly or wrongly, I believe that the civilizations of China, Japan, and of the Islamic world are somewhat more accessible to learners on both sides of the desk. This is certainly not to deny the existence of stereotypes and misinformation with regard to these civilizations; addressing and correcting these are key underlying goals of this course! At a minimum, however, the West's enduring fondness for the products of China and the aesthetics of Japan have resulted in a surface awareness of these two East Asian civilizations. The monotheism of Islam and its prominence in global affairs serve something of a similar role. It does not seem to me that India or Africa enjoy even this degree of popular awareness. Like India, Africa defies accurate generalization. Its size alone has resulted in enormous diversity of civilization and cultural expression. It remains a sensitive topic given the lingering effects of the slave trade and the racist attitudes which accompanied that trade. Time and space limitations preclude the inclusion of a comparable African sample unit here, but it is in development.

In an effort to be more inclusive in reference to dates, the course uses Before Common Era (B.C.E.) and Common Era (C.E.) designations. While far from being genuinely common to the world, they are somewhat more objective than the traditional system's obvious Christian roots.

Asian and African Civilizations

Rationale

The need for a comprehensive introduction to the culture and history of the non-Western world reflects both global realities and local choices. The concept of the "shrinking globe" is a relatively new one, but the reality is much older than many may realize. The "global village" is not merely the product of enhanced communications and transportation systems in the twentieth century. It is the result of a process of growing exchanges between various parts of the world which have been increasing in volume and intensity for the last several hundred years and whose roots go back some two thousand or more years.

That this process is likely to continue into the twenty-first century and beyond is a virtual given. The industrialized world remains heavily dependent upon oil resources concentrated in the Islamic world. The Chinese economy is the world's fastest growing economy and will likely become the world's largest the next century; its consuming population is already the world's largest. India is the world's largest functioning democracy and also represents an enormous market for investment and sales. Japan remains a key player in the global economy with the world's highest GDP per capita and one of the highest savings rates on the planet. African nations are important sources of natural resources critical to the industrial world, and the consuming public. Africa also represents an enormous market for investment.

These societies have also made enormous contributions to the body of the world's arts, religions, philosophies, and sciences which makes them worthy of serious study whatever economic or political position they currently occupy. In addition, traditional ways of life which developed in all these areas may provide important cues for the modern world on how to live in greater harmony with the natural environment, how to manage a sustainable economy and way of life.

Closer to home, the American population and Shorecrest's own student body include people from many different non-Western cultures. About one-fifth of the present Shorecrest student population is comprised of such students, and it is the school's sense and hope that this representation will increase in the future. One way of validating the cultural backgrounds of these students is to incorporate them into the curricular requirements. It is further desired that the development of such a curriculum in collaboration with other departments, notably the Arts and Humanities, would create a non-Western "center of excellence" at Shorecrest which would further distinguish it from other schools in the Tampa Bay area.

In addition, whatever one's culture of origin, today's young people, our students, will be working ever more closely with people from other cultures in the coming century as colleagues and partners in increasing ventures -- intellectual, business, and personal. To ensure that our graduates are as well-informed about and sensitive to the traditions and values of other cultures is one way for Shorecrest to fulfill its mission promise of offering "the highest quality of academic program...in a supportive environment."

Asian and African Civilizations

Course Overview

This course is designed as a one-year introduction to the cultures* of Asia and Africa. It does not pretend to be all-inclusive but targets principal representative cultures of this part of the world including those of China, Japan, the Indian sub-continent, the eastern/southern littoral of the Mediterranean, and sub-Saharan Africa. The course begins with a consideration of the "Classical" cultures that developed in each area** and then studies the process of change which occurred in each as a result of the passage of time and of interaction -- both peaceful and bellicose -- with other cultures, in particular that of the Western world in the "Modern" era.

In brief, the course presents each of the focus civilizations as representing efforts to come to terms with the physical environment, with one another, and with the quest for broader meaning to human existence. While the particulars of these civilizations differ from one another in many ways over their long existences, certain guiding themes and several "key questions" will be used to aid the student in making sense of each and in comparing/contrasting civilizations with one another.

The course begins with a short introduction to the geography and climate patterns of the overall area under consideration. In an effort to get beyond what might be considered "artificial" political boundaries, this introduction identifies and focuses on regions rather than on either modern or historical states. Rainfall amounts, temperatures, prevailing winds, weather patterns, and seasonal variation as well as the more obvious geographic features will be considered in identifying these broader regions. From the start and with periodic reminders throughout the course, students will be encouraged to understand the roles of these natural "givens" in the cultures under study -- how they impact on way of life and thought, how they contribute to isolation and/or interaction over time.

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*While anthropologists might take exception claiming a broader meaning for "culture" than for "civilization," the two terms are used more or less interchangeably here.

**Because it is developed in Ancient World History, the Classical civilization of the Mediterranean basin is not a part of this course.

The early months of the course focus on the "Classical" or traditional ways of life and thought which developed primarily within (as opposed to between) the separate regions. A consideration of government, religion and/or philosophy, technological and artistic achievements, and outstanding dynasties and individuals forms the core of each sub-unit. It should be noted that emphasis on these is not identical from one region to another but concentrates on the enduring aspects of each to later ages.

As the oldest continuous civilization on earth, China through the Han dynasty (circa 220 C.E.) is the point of departure for this section. Key notions which formed the core of China's traditional culture are emphasized. Early on, Taoism and Confucianism provided guidelines for orderly social relations, the Mandate of Heaven legitimized the rule of just emperors, and a keen sense of the superiority of their civilization led the Chinese into an enduring ethnocentricism. A study of early India, the next oldest continuous civilization on earth, through the Gupta dynasty (540 C.E.) follows. Political cultural unity eluded the Indians, but they invested enormous energy into a philosophical investigation of the nature of the universe and the place of humans within it. The course develops the central beliefs of Hinduism, Jainism, and Buddhism as India's spiritual legacy to world civilization. The cultural influence of China and India on Southeast Asia is also noted, but not developed in detail.

The vital role of the Silk Road as a conduit of trade goods and ideas joining much of the ancient Eurasian/Mediterranean world marks the beginning of the "shrinking world" theme that resurfaces repeatedly throughout the course. The eastward spread of Buddhism along the Silk Road returns the focus to China (through the Sung dynasty,mid-1200's C.E.) and, for the first time, to Japan (through the end of the Fujiwara Period, circa 1200 C.E.). As much of Japan's early culture derived from that of China, the section serves to remind and reinforce China's role as exemplar for much of East and Southeast Asia while establishing features particular to Japan's own evolution. Students will consider the attraction of much of the world for aspects of modern American culture as a phenomenon for contrast and comparison with the attraction of much of East and Southeast Asia for traditional Chinese civilization.

The course next jumps back about 600 years and moves west (still along the trade routes) to consider the rise of Islam and its impact on the cultures of West Asia, the Mediterranean Basin, as well as portions of

North, West, and East Africa. As with the treatment of East Asian religions, Islam is presented as a response to a particular set of circumstances facing the people of that area at that moment in time as well as an attempt to deal with more transcendant issues common to the human experience. The incredibly rapid spread of Islam created an empire which stretched from the Atlantic to the Indus. The political unity of this empire was relatively short-lived, but a remarkable degree of cultural unity was established which endures in part to the present. The exchange of goods and ideas between regions and civilizations along established and newly-developing trade routes continues to be an underlying theme of the course. A second theme also emerges during this period: the clash of militant religions, focusing upon the "Crusades" in West Asia and the Muslim conquest of northern India. Students are challenged to consider modern congruencies in the relations of these religions and regions.

As is the case with civilizations farther to the east, consideration of the Islamic world stops at about 1250 C.E. in order to consider the phenomenon of the Mongols. The coming together of the Mongol tribes under the leadership of Jenghis Khan is the crux of what has been termed the "breakup century" of the 1200s. The initially destructive impact of the Mongols is well-documented and generally well-known. Much less appreciated is their role in fostering trade and cultural exchange throughout most of Asia proper with indirect consequences for Europe and large parts of Africa. The roads constructed during the century or so of their dominance, the order which Mongol troops and their auxillaries maintained along such roads, and the rise of Mongol-descended dynasties in China, Central Asia, India, and Persia were key elements in bringing much of the "known" world back into regular contact. Such contact stimulated wealth and increased knowledge in much of Eurasia; it also enabled the so-called "Black Death" to spread from China to Europe over the first half of the 1300's. The attendant death and doubts disrupted established norms of thought, politics, and economic activity throughout the regions affected. Modern echoes of the impact of disease are treated in the Pandemic of 1918-1919 and the current AIDS pandemic.

The appetite for goods and curiosity about other parts of the world has only intensified since the Mongol era, and this "modern" period is the focus of the second half of the course. As the global community continues to interact, however, it is important not to lose sight of continuing cultural diversity. For this reason, the second part of the course continues to look at separate cultural regions while also concentrating on new themes which grow in importance over time. In particular among these new themes is the increasing role of Europeans in the rest of the world -- for better and for worse. General similarities and individual differences in the responses of indigenous civilizations to the arrival and impact of Europeans provide additional ways of coming to terms with more recent events. The second half is subdivided into an "early modern" and "modern" period with 1800 as the approximate division between the two subdivisions.

China's position in East Asia and the world remained largely the same throughout the early modern period. A short period of active interest in the outside world came to an abrupt end in the early 1400's, and China withdrew into itself. The collapse of the Mongol Empire left China largely isolated along land routes, and its position at the eastern extreme of the Eurasian landmass left it far removed from early European ventures down the African coast and into the Indian Ocean. It retained an ethnocentric pride in its own antiquity and traditions which was reinforced by the tributary relationships it maintained with its Southeast Asian neighbors and by the continuing desire of the West for China's products. The Manchu Qing dynasty which succeeded the Ming in 1644 largely continued their predecessors' internal and foreign policies. To the end of the "early modern" era, it would be up to all foreigners to come to China and to do business on China's terms once there.

Japan's island geography left it extremely isolated geographically; even the Mongols had not been able to conquer it despite two attempts. In the early modern period, it resolved lingering political disunity through a series of brutal civil wars which shaped social structures and religious-cultural attitudes. Following China's example as they had so often in the past, and ethnocentric in their own right, Japan's rulers also embraced a position of deliberate isolation -- fearful that contact with outsiders might disturb the peace and prosperity which had been achieved at such high cost. Students debate xenophobia and isolationism as responses to contact with and competition from foreigners in the context of modern America as one way to comprehend the historical responses of these East Asian nations.

Geographically closer, divided politically and religiously, rich in resources, products, and labor, India was more vulnerable to the Europeans than were her neighbors farther east. The political consolidation and religious toleration of early Mughal rulers were largely lost by later generations, and a succession of European nations was increasingly able to play one faction of Indians against another. First the Portuguese and the Dutch vied for commercial dominance in India and the Indian Ocean, a contest made more brutal by the religious hatreds which existed between these two European rivals and their common distaste for either Hinduism or Islam. These two were eclipsed, in turn, by the contest between France and Britain for European and imperial dominance in which India was but one theater of a virtually global conflict. By the end of the early modern age, India was increasingly under the sway of a British trading company.

Profitting from their location at the western termini of land and sea trade routes, the Ottoman Turks led the post-Mongol Islamic political resurgence in the Levant. Well-armed and well-led, the Ottomans restored much of the old Islamic empire and added significant territories in southeastern Europe as well, reaching their territorial peak in the mid-1500's. The resulting empire lacked cohesion, however, sprawling over three continents and including dozens of ethnic and religious groups who felt little attachment to the Ottoman entity. Despite the efforts of early Ottoman rulers to bind this disparate population into an imperial citizenry, local identities remained strong. Lacking significant exploitable resources, the Empire depended on the profits of trade and war. The loss of control of the Indian Ocean trade routes to Europeans,the shifting of trade away from the Mediterranean, repeated military defeats, and short-sighted leadership left the Empire prey to its neighbors and to disaffected elements within the Empire as well. By 1800, its continued existence was in jeopardy.

Sub-Saharan Africa presents a wide spectrum of peoples and states in varying stages of development so the course focuses on developments in Mali in central West Africa as being somewhat representative of the larger African experience during this time. A flourishing urban civilization, rooted in trade, existed alongside towns and villages based in agriculture, pastoralism, and craft production. Timbuktu, Mali, Jenne, and Gao were centers of long-distance trading across the Sahara which had occurred for centuries by the beginning of the early modern era. The arrival of the Europeans from the 1400's onward had important consequences despite being confined to the coasts in western Africa. Trade routes shifted west and south to the disadvantage of those inland states which had been situated at the desert's edge while benefitting coastal states, especially those who controlled their own gold fields such as Benin and Asanti. The exploitable wealth of the Americas and the shortage of available labor there led to an enormous increase in the slave trade all along the Atlantic coast and to a racism hitherto unknown anywhere in the various dealings between cultures. It is perhaps ironic that nineteenth century European efforts to end the slave trade brought considerable economic dislocation to these coastal "forest" states.

Throughout this "early modern" period, two themes clearly dominate global history. First, an ever-increasing volume of trade along a widening network of land and sea routes was resulting in unprecedented contact between major civilizations around the world; a genuinely global economy was emerging. Advances in navigation led to greater knowledge about and access to the resources and cultures of the world; physical isolation was no longer possible. Second, for a variety of reasons, European nations were becoming much more active participants in these trade networks than had ever before been the case. The increasing global presence of Europeans profoundly affected relationships between and within most world civilizations, including Europe's own. Both of these themes intensify as the course moves into its final section which deals with the most recent 200 or so years. In addition, the impact elsewhere of Western ideas of government, economics, culture, and society becomes problematic for much of the non-Western world. The course examines each of the major civilizations to identify both domestic and foreign responses to the effects of these themes, and, more broadly, establishes patterns of similarity and difference between the civilizations' responses.

For China and the Chinese, the shock of encountering the Europeans' own sense of superiority was profound, particularly as it was accompanied by an apparently superior military, technological, and industrial capability. How to reconcile these with deeply-felt traditional values and attitudes has challenged the Chinese throughout the modern age. The initial refusal/inability to adapt to the changed circumstances of world relationships led to China's humiliation in foreign affairs, to continuing interference in its internal affairs by a wide range of outsiders, and to tremendous intellectual and actual conflict within China as it struggled and still struggles to identify an acceptable place in the modern world.

Learning from the Chinese experience yet again, this time what not to do, the Japanese moved quickly to embrace selected aspects of European/Western civilization to protect themselves and their traditions. Japan's transformation from "feudal" society to modernity was largely accomplished within one generation and with virtually no direct foreign involvement. By the beginning of the twentieth century, Japan had joined the Europeans in taking advantage of China and had become, for the first time, the nation to which other Asian nations, including China, looked for cultural models and guidance, a role Japan continues to play despite its role in World War II.

India's position again differed from that of its East Asia neighbors. Unlike them, India became a direct colony of Britain and was subject to the rule of Britain's law, economy, and culture. How to react to these, however, while remaining true to their own cultural traditions posed questions not unlike those faced by the Chinese in the same time period. These issues of modernity vs. tradition, "Western" vs. Indian were additionally complicated by longstanding religious tensions within the Indian subcontinent. The failure of India's war for independence in 1857-1858 led many Indian intellectuals back to the nonviolent techniques of their own cultural traditions coupled with the democratic ideals of their colonial governors. Multiple factors contributed to India's achievement of independence in 1947, but its particular blend of tactics and goals spared India from long and devastating civil wars as occurred in China and from being a foreign aggressor as was true of Japan. A secular democracy, the world's largest, India continues to balance age-old traditions and rivalries with the quest for a modern national identity.

The so-called "sick man of Europe," the Ottoman Empire continued to exist at the convenience of European powers. Despite some efforts at internal reforms, discontent on the part of its subject peoples led to continuing revolts in the 19th century. The strains of direct participation in World War I and its defeat in that conflict led to the collapse of the Empire in 1919. The various states which emerged from the core area have borders that were drawn by Westerners for their own benefit without particular regard for local interests or geography. States in the region tried both accomodation and confrontation with Western interests with varying, but generally unsatisfying results. Regional relations were further complicated by the emergence of an independent Israel in 1948 and the Cold War rivalry of the superpowers. The industrialized world's critical need for oil has restored the overall area to a position of great importance strategically and economically, but a meaningful identity remains unclear, especially for the masses.

The modern age brought an unprecedented degree of similarity to Africa's heretofore quite diverse experience. Within the space of approximately one generation, virtually all of Africa was divided between a handful of European nations which exploited its natural and human resources. Repeated episodes of African resistance were defeated by the superior weaponry of the numerically inferior colonizers. The specific conditions of their colonial experience varied somewhat according to which Europeans claimed dominance, but everywhere the shape of African life was made to conform to the needs and demands of non-Africans. Zimbabwe is the case study for Africa in this section. Moving chronologically from its early Shona civilization through the nineteenth century conquests of the Ndebele, students learn of pre-colonial African state-building. The conquest and 80+ year administration of area by Rhodes and Britain are typical of what most of Africa experienced as is the struggle by the African Zimbabweans to regain their political and cultural independence in the 1960's and 1970's. The exceptional experience of Ethiopia is also highlighted: it was able to stand up to colonial claims and preserve its independence, only briefly falling under Italian rule in the 1930's. Ethiopia's experience during this period gave hope to millions of Africans around the world that all of Africa could and would eventually be free.

The course concludes with an open-ended speculation on what the future may have in store as the global community becomes ever smaller, more interconnected, and more interdependent. Of particular interest is a consideration of how the values of traditional societies may still have meaning and applications for the information age.

Some Broad Themes

1. Cultures represent human efforts to come to terms with the physical environment, with one another, and with the quest for broader meaning to human existence. As such, each culture must be appreciated within its own specific geographic, chronological, and developmental context. Each has made contributions to the benefit of humankind.

2. The fact of global interdependence is not new. It is only the degree to which the civilizations of the world depend on and are affected by one another that has increased in the 20th century.

3. The desire for trade goods and profits has been and probably remains the most powerful impetus for contact and exchanges between civilizations.

4. Contacts between civilizations have not always been voluntary nor have they always produced positive results for all concerned. The historic experience of contact in many cases continues to shape attitudes in the modern world.

5. Individuals can change the course of history and have done so repeatedly. Every civilization has its heroes and its villains. It is also true that one culture's hero may be another culture's villain.

6. For most of chronological history, certain Asian civilizations were more urban, technologically sophisticated, and scientifically aware than any others on the planet. Overwhelmingly, the flow of goods and ideas has been from east to west across Eurasia. It is only in the last few hundred years that "the West" has tended to dominate.

7. In their effort to come to terms with the world and their place in it, traditional thinkers developed ideas and ways of life which continue to have meaning for the present.

Some Key Questions

1. What is the relationship of humankind relative to the natural world? How is this relationship expressed economics, politics, science, religion, and the arts?

2. What is the purpose of life/living? Is there a transcendent purpose? If so, how does this affect the way people live their lives?

3. What constitutes right and wrong? Are these moral and/or legal concepts? What is the relationship of relationship of law and religion? Do they overlap? Should they overlap?

4. What is expected from government whatever its form? What is the source of government's authority? If a government does not exercise its authority in appropriate ways, what can be done about it?

5. What behaviors are considered acceptable and appropriate within the family? between friends? between citizens? How are these determined? How are these enforced? To what extent is the individual autonomous in his or her relations with others? To what extent is s/he bound by broader social expectations?

6. What is the attitude towards other cultures and traditions? other religions? What are attitudes toward gender? toward ethnicity?

7. To what extent is "civilization" synonymous with material achievement?

8. To what extent is the present shaped by the past? To what extent can modern global society learn from the experiences of people and cultures of the past?

First Semester Topical Overview

Classical Cultures(all dates are Common Era)

- -Explanations and Expectations

- -Overall Geographic Introduction to African and Eurasian landmasses

- -China
  - -role of geography and climate
  - -Taoism
  - -Confucianism
  - -Mandate of Heaven/Dynastic Cycle
  - -Chou, Qin, and Han dynasties as shapers of Chinese civilization
  - -cultural homogeneity and cultural superiority
  - -early achievements (to 200)
  - -influence on surrounding areas, esp. SE Asia and Korea

- -India
  - -role of geography and climate
  - -Indus River Civilization
  - -Arrival and Impact of the Aryans
  - -Hinduism
  - -Hinduism and Indian Culture
  - -Jainism
  - -Buddhism and its spread, esp. to China and Japan
  - -Asoka's rule
  - -absence of lasting political unity
  - -influence of surrounding areas, esp. SE Asia
  - -early achievements (to 550)
- -Overall importance of the Silk Road as artery of trade and info which joined much of the ancient world.

- -China
  - -adaptation and influence of Buddhism
  - -influence on surrounding areas, esp. Japan
  - -T'ang dynasty achievements, aesthetics, suppression of Buddhism
  - -evolution and importance of the exam system

  - Sung China: the world's first pre-modern society (?)
    - achievements and aesthetics
  - Neo-Confucianism

- Japan
  - role of geography and climate
  - Shinto
  - ethnocentricity and cultural homogeneity
  - influence of China as political, economic, social, and cultural model
  - Yamato dynasty and the Fujiwara Courtier Age (to 1200)
  - Buddhism in Japan

***American culture as modern global equivalent to Chinese culture in Asia?

- West Asia/North Africa
  - role of geography and climate
  - pre-Islamic conditions
  - Mohammed and Islam
    - the Quran and the Sharia
  - spread of Islam: pol. and econ. consequences (to 1200)
  - the evolution of Islamic culture
  - Intellectual achievements
  - Islamic Spain as cultural bridge to Europe; trans-Saharan trade routes as cultural bridge to sub-Saharan Africa
  - the clash of religions: "Crusades" in West Asia/North Africa and Muslims vs. Hindus in India

***Modern "Crusades" in these areas?

- Mongols
  - traditional stereotype vs Mongols as unifiers of much of "known" world
  - adaptive connoisseurs, esp. in China and Persia
  - roads--->increased trade, movement of people/ideas/disease
  - West meets East: Marco Polo and Ibn-Battuta
  - decline and consequences

***1918-19 Pandemic and AIDS as modern "Black Deaths"?

Second Semester Topical Overview

Early Modern Cultures (to 1800)

-China
- -Yuan (Mongol), Ming, and Qing (Manchu) dynasties (to 1800)
- -continued notions of cultural superiority
- -the tribute system of diplomacy
- -15th c. Ming naval expeditions vs those of Portugal
  - -what if they had met?!
- -early impressions of Westerners and their civilization
- -deliberate isolation and closely circumscribed contact with Western "raw barbarians"

-Japan
- -the Shogunate
- -Warrior Age--->political reunification, 1600
- -Zen Buddhism and its influence on the arts/aesthetics
- -Tokugawa policies for political/social control
- -early impressions of Westerners and their civilization, esp. Christianity-->suppression of Christianity, 1640s
- -modeling of China's isolationist policies
- -18th c. changes within Japanese society

***20th c. American isolationism, xenophobia, cultural superiority as modern parallels?

-India
- -Mughal (Mongol) dynasty
- -contrasting policies of Akbar and Aurangzeb
  - -parallels with Elizabeth I vs. Philip II or Louis XIV
- -flowering of Indian culture under Mughal and Rajput patronage
- -arrival and impact of the Europeans
- -gradual loss of sovereignty to British East India Co.

-West Asia/North Africa
- -rise of Ottomans in aftermath of Mongols
- -sprawling, multinational, multireligious nature of the Empire
- -importance of trade and war to Ottoman vitality
- -impact of European competitors and the "Commercial Revolution"

-Sub-Saharan Africa
- -case study: Ghana/Mali/Songhai in central West Africa
  - -role of geography and climate
  - -urban civilization
  - -regional and global trade connections
  - -influence of Islam
  - -influence of arrival of Europeans along the Atlantic coast
- -matrilineality as alternative to patrilineal social organization
- -impact of slave trade on Africa and on European attitudes to Africans
  - -rise of Asanti and other "forest kingdoms"
  - -development of virulent racism as justification

Section Summary and Crystal Ball Gazing

- -increasing awareness of and access to global populations/resources
- -increasing importance of trade--->emergence of a global economy
- -increasing role of Europeans/Westerners
- -impact of Europeans and the ideas on non-European societies

Modern Cultures (to the present)

-China
- -clash of cultural values and economic interests with the West: kowtow and opium
- -devastating effects of clinging to traditional ways
  - -military defeats by Britain and France
  - -"unequal" treaties and foreign interference in Chinese affairs
  - -repeated domestic uprisings, esp Taipings and Boxers
  - -defeat by Japan!
  - -collapse of Qing and dynastic China
- -Republican China
  - -what does it mean to be Chinese?
  - -May Fourth (1919) Movement
  - -Warlord Era

- -Guomindang vs Chinese Communism
- -Japanese invasion and World War II

-Two Chinas, but focus here is on PRC
    - -Maoism
    - -Sino-Soviet relations
    - -Sino-American relations
    - -Hong Kong, 1997
    - -what does it mean to be Chinese?

-Japan

- -the negative example of China of 19th c. China
- -Meiji Era transformation of Japan
    - -selective adaptation of Western ways
    - -new methods, old values
- -empire building, 1894-1945
- -the "Japanese miracle"
- -Japan as model for 21st century Asia?

-India

- -experience as direct European colony
- -failure of 1857-58 War for Independence
- -growth of Indian national consciousness and pol. parties
- -rise of nonviolence in the name of independence and democracy
- -Gandhi
    - -ideas, career, and assassination
- -problems and potential

-West Asia (Ottoman Empire)

- -"sick man of Europe"
- -19th c.: Suez, the Straits, and the balance of power
- -World War I and collapse
- -successor states and the politics of oil
- -Israel
- -impact of the Cold War
- -a resurgent Islam

-Sub-Saharan Africa

- -case study: Zimbabwe in southern Africa
    - -the Shona and Great Zimbabwe

    - the coming of the Ndebele
    - the coming of Rhodes and colonialism
    - tribal cultural nationalism--->political nationalism
    - minority rule, 1967-1980
    - majority rule, 1980-present
- exceptional case study: Ethiopia
    - strategic location
    - ancient origins and cultural achievements
    - religious diversity: Copts, Falashas, Muslims, and traditional religionists
    - independence throughout the colonial period
        - Menelik at Adowa, 1986
    - Italian conquest and administration, 1935-1941
    - as enduring symbol of hope for Africa and its peoples
    - problems since the 1970s

-Conclusion

- How has the past shaped the present?
- What does the future hold?
- What can modern society learn from trad. cultures of the past?

Asian and African Civilizations
A Sampler of Learning Projects

1. Edit a newpaper for (up to) a decade from the period 1500 to 1900 for any African or Asian civilization. Include significant events such as battles, wars, treaties, cultural developments, land acquisitions or losses, profiles of important people, obituaries, and the like. You may wish to include editorial , maps, illustrations, and/or political cartoons. Be creative and have some fun, but include plenty of historical news!! A video newsreel format could be an alternate form of this.

2. On a map of the American/European/African Atlantic coasts, show the principal products, trade routes, and trading partners of the "triangle trades" of the 18th century. In an accompanying paper, evaluate the impact of the "triangle trade" on each continent's economy and society.

3. Perfect a haiku. Ilustrate it with an ink drawing and frame your drawing as a hanging scroll.

4. Research a current events situation. In a paper of approx. 1250 words, develop the historical origins of the situation, explain the present, and analyze probable consequences for the future. A partial list follows to give you ideas. If you want to pursue some other topic, please discuss it with me first.

    The Chinese Occupation of Tibet
    The War in Bosnia
    Hindu Fundamentalism
    The Plight of the Kurds
    The Politics of Water in the Mideast
    Hutus vs Tutsis in Rwanda or Burundi
    The Palestinian "Intifada"
    Dismantling Apartheid in South Africa
    (African) Socialism in Mozambique
    Border Problems between India and Pakistan
    Islamic Fundamentalism (pick one country in Asia or Africa as your focus)

5. Create an African-inspired mask. In an accompanying paper, explain the mask's symbolism and design a ceremony around your mask. What kind of music, costumes, and food should accompany it? What kind of dance would the mask perform? What role would the mask play? You might also wish to demonstrate these!

6. Prepare a research paper of approximately 1250 words on one of the following topics. Fully develop background information, describe the event and its immediate outcome(s), and explore the consequences in your concluding paragraphs. A selection of possible topics follows. Please clear any other topics with me first.

The Massacre at Amritsar, 1919
The Taiping Rebellion, 1850-1864
The Berlin Conference, 1885
The Sino-Japanese War, 1894-95
The Russo-Japanese War, 1904-05
The Fashoda Incident, 1898
The Boer War, 1899-1902
Shaka and the Zulu Mfecane
Samori and the Guinea Resistance
The Marco Polo Bridge Incident, 1931
The Indian War for Independence, 1857
(also called the Sepoy Mutiny)
The "Door of No Return" at Goree
The Battle of Adowa, 1896
India on the Eve of Independence
African or Asian participation in
World War I in Europe
Nkrumah and Pan-Africanism

7. As an alternative to a written paper on one of the above topics, prepare a video that provides comparable information. You might be a participant in the event, an interviewer of participants, a newscaster, whatever. You may want to work with a partner or two. Work up some costuming, maps, special effects -- whatever you think will make for an interesting and informative treatment of chosen topic. OR prepare a diary as if you were a participant in the event or write a short story which brings out the pertinent information.

8. For a period of one week, try to refrain from all forms of violence towards other human beings. Examples of violence include (but are not limited to) anger, hate, gossip, criticism, evil thoughts, jealousy, and physical violence. Try to remove violence from speech, mind, and action. Try not to support others if they engage in violent speech, thought, or conduct. Try your best to pursue these principles without letting them interrupt your daily tasks. Keep a journal of your experiences. In a written form of your choice, address the following questions: Is the Jain principle of ahimsa useful in every day life? Is it practical? Did you find the experiment difficult? Why? Was it enjoyable and/or enlightening? Why?

9. Drawing on your knowledge of the mathematical principles behind much of Islamic art,
- a. Design, draw, and decorate the entrance to a building based on these principles. OR
- b. Design and draw a pattern for a symmetrical "Oriental" carpet. OR
- c. Create a tughra based on your own intials or name.

In a short paper, explain your application of mathematical principles for decorative purposes.

10. Consider one of the following Chinese scientific practices. On what principles or assumptions is the practice based? What its modern relevance/use, if any? How does Western science regard the practice? What is your opinion of how "scientific" it is?
- a. geomancy, the practice of feng shui.
- b. acupuncture
- c. the abacus as "computer" (a demonstration would be most impressive!)
- d. the Chinese zodiac (perhaps compared with that of the Western world)

Classical India*

Overall Introduction

Dating from approximately 3000 B.C.E., Indian civilization is generally considered to be the second oldest continuous civilization on earth, after China's although some archaeological evidence suggests that the two civilizations developed at about the same time. Perhaps more importantly, Classical Indian civilization shares several important parallels with early China's experience: the importance of rivers in the development of early civilization, the endurance of ancient religious philosophies/values as well as of socioeconomic systems, and a degree of isolation from other civilizations (less marked than China, however).

With a current population ofsome 875 million people representing an enormous diversity of language and ethnicity, India is the modern world's largest democracy. It is also a rapidly developing industrial and military force in South Asia and the Indian Ocean region generally. (SR1) Its population is one of the world's fastest growing despite government efforts at population control and the widespread effects of poverty. At current growth rates, India's population will surpass China's by about 2020. The ability to provide adequately for its people poses important challenges for the present generation of India's leaders.

Geographic Introduction

The Indian subcontinent is a peninsula off the southern side of Asia. With a total square mileage of some 1.7 million miles, South Asia is larger than all of Europe. It accounts for approximately 2.4% of the earth's land surface and is home to about 15% of the world's population. It includes the modern states of India (Bharat), Pakistan, and Bangladesh as well as the Himalayan states of Nepal and Bhutan. Sri Lanka, an island nation off India's southeastern coast and the island republic of The Maldives off the southwestern tip are also considered part of South Asia. (SR2)

The Indian subcontinent's geography has had important effects on its history, its climate, its economy, and its culture. Natural barriers have traditionally provided some protection from invasion. Two intersecting ranges of the the Himalayas serve to isolate the subcontinent from its Asian neighbors: the Hindu Kush to the northwest and the Karakoram to the north and northeast. Ninety two of the world's ninety four tallest mountains are contained within these two ranges. The Karakoram has almost no passes at lower altitudes which might permit the large-scale movement of people and equipment. At some 3500 feet, however, the Khyber Pass (and others) through the Hindu Kush has served as an invasion route on several occasions. These impressive mountain ranges also afford an important measure of protection from icy winter winds while contributing to the summer rainfall patterns on which the region depends for its agriculture.

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* The term "India" is generally meant to be inclusive of the entire subcontinent of South Asia throughout this unit.

Large expanses of open water have also acted as natural isolators for much of the subcontinent's early history: the Arabian Sea to the west, the Indian Ocean to the south, and the enormous Bay of Bengal to the east. The relative lack of island "stepping stones" and the fierceness of the storms which brew on these open bodies of water discouraged early seafarers. Gradually, however, these waters began to link India with other parts of the world in a network of trade routes which at times also carried conquerors and missionaries of different faiths.

Within the subcontinent itself, several geographic features predominate. It may be helpful to think of India as resembling a diamond. (TN1) To the west is the Thar Desert (also called the Great Indian Desert); to the east, the jungles of Bengal and coastal Assam. Both these features have provided secondary protection from land-based invasion by those hardy enough brave the surrounding mountains. The Indo-Gangetic Plain (also called the north Indian Plain) stretches across the subcontinent's northern half facilitating the movement of goods, ideas, and troops. The southern half is dominated by the Deccan, an ancient and heavily eroded plateau area whose rugged terrain has tended to play the opposite role of the northern plains in terms of human interactions. Running parallel to southern India's coasts are the "ghats", relatively low mountains which descend right to the water's edge. The ghats create many relatively protected harbors along both of India's coasts which have proven useful for trade, but which also led to existence of foreign enclaves within India since the 1500's. India's southernmost tip is quite flat.

The subcontinent's three most important rivers are to be found in the northern half of the "diamond" although most of India has reasonably good access to rivers, most of which are considered sacred. Draining the Hindu Kush and the foothills of the Himalayas, the Indus River, home of India's earliest civilization, flows in a generally southern direction emptying into the Arabian Sea. India's most sacred river, the Ganges, drains the southern slopes of the Himalayas and flows generally eastward across northern India before emptying into the Bay of Bengal. (SR3) Draining the northern slopes of the Himalayas, the Brahmaputra River flows generally southeast at first, switches sharply westward and then sharply south as it joins the Ganges and the Bay of Bengal. Each of these rivers is important for agriculture; most are sites of ritual purification for the devout; most are badly polluted at present with sewage and agricultural/industrial effluents.

India's climate is largely determined by its mountainous northern frontier and the monsoon cycle. Winter winds blow from the north, but the mountains shield most of the subcontinent from the bitter extremes of the Asian mainland's winter. December to June is generally dry. Temperatures gradually rise from the 70's in December to the 100's in June. Summer winds blow from the south, off the wide open waters of the Indian Ocean, and this leads to the coming of the monsoons, a period of hot, windy, wet weather. Much of the subcontinent gets between 7' and 25' of rain from June to August alone with annual rainfall that ranges from 10 to 30 times what St. Petersburg gets on annual average (43"). Reliance on the monsoons for water for widespread agriculture is dangerous: too little rain (or too late) can result in famine; too much rain can lead to potentially disastrous flooding. Over 100,000 Bangladeshis were killed in monsoon flooding in 1990 alone, for example. There is no real alternative at present, however, and Indians have shown great ingenuity in dealing with the extremes of the monsoon season.

Indus River (or Harappan) Civilization

From about 3000 B.C.E. until about 1500 B.C.E., a flourishing urban civilization developed in the Indus River Valley. More recently discovered and less completely known or understood than those of the Nile, the Tigris Euphrates, and the Huang Ho (Yellow) Rivers, this Indus River Civilization represents a fourth major river civilization. There are two principal sites, those of Mohenjo-Daru in the south and Harappa about 450 miles to the northeast, as well as some 1,000 lesser sites.

Archaeological evidence suggests that the two main sites were largely identical in terms of size and layout. Each city was generally square in layout and about one square mile in size. Each used a grid system to divide the city into blocks, with principal routes going north-south and lesser streets going east-west. Both cities had extensive and elaborate water management systems: for flood control and irrigation, for public sanitation, for public (possibly ritual) bathing and domestic use. Both cities have buildings which appear to have been intended for public use: large halls for assemblies and audiences; public bathing complexes complete with what may have been changing rooms; storage facilities, probably for grains; and forge/kiln areas. Somewhat unusually, neither city has obvious temple structures. Residential construction featured thick windowless exterior walls surrounding open inner courtyards with latticed windows to provide light and air to the interiors. Multi-storied architecture was common in both municipal and residential construction. Both cities were built primarily of standard-sized baked clay bricks.* In both cities and various of the lesser sites, clay was also used to make small seals, many carefully incised with detailed images of animals. Large numbers of clay figurines, mostly female, have also been found in the ruins as have dice and various toys.

Much remains unclear about the details of life in Indus River civilization, but archaeologists and scholars have drawn some conclusions. The cities appear to have been planned sites located near the course of the Indus as it flowed during that era. The standardization of urban planning and water management suggests the existence of a powerful political and/or religious authority which could command and coordinate the labor and materials necessary to create these cities. The standardized size of the cities themselves as well as of the bricks used to construct them demonstrates a uniformity of measures which also suggests the existence of a centralized authority.

Harappan civilization appears to have had a differentiated economy. Cultivation of grains, fruits, and cotton is indicated as the economic activity of most Harappans with animal husbandry -- of cows, sheep, and chickens -- as a supplement. Trade with other areas is indicated by ruins of what were probably ports along the (then) Arabian Sea coast as well as the presence of Harappan artifacts in the cities of Sumer to the west. It seems probable that dyed cotton cloth and precious/semi-precious stones were the basis for such trade.

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*So many of these durable bricks existed that British colonial authorities used huge quantities of them during the construction of the Indian railroad system in the nineteenth century (C.E.) which is one reason why a more complete understanding of Indus River Civilization continues to elude archaeologists and historians.

The Harappan language remains largely undeciphered despite some progress in recent years by Walter Fairservis, Jr. and others. The seals described above contain short inscriptions in which combinations of elements are rarely repeated, suggesting that the inscriptions may represent names and/or titles. It may be that writing was only used for limited purposes by limited segments of the population. It may also be that longer passages were written on less durable material than baked clay. The tablets' recurring use of animals, especially bulls and cobra-like snakes, suggests that these may have been worshipped and/or used as symbols of strength, of masculinity, of the power of life and death. The tablets also frequently depict the pipal tree which suggests a reverence for the generative force of nature. The female figurines may have been associated with fertility cults in what appears to have been a primarily agricultural society. Taken in combination with the images of animals and trees, the strong implication is that the Indus River civilization was polytheistic.

Harappan civilization went into decline about 1500 B.C.E. for reasons which are not clear nor agreed upon among scholars. Invasion is one possibility. The Aryans were beginning to come over the Hindu Kush at about this time, but their legends speak of great cities which were already in ruins. In addition, the ruins themselves do not show signs of having been set on fire or deliberately destroyed; decline seems to have occurred more gradually. Some sort of devastating plague is a possible explanation. With large numbers dead, survivors might have permanently abandoned the sites. Earthquake and/or a series of floods or famines might also have fundamentally disrupted life in the area. A more recent hypothesis questions whether the Indus River civilization might not have been a victim of its own success. As its population grew, pressures on the land increased leading to deforestation, soil depletion, erosion, and a silting up of the Indus which might have caused it to change its course. In this scenario, human activities ultimately created an environment in which concentrated urban living was no longer sustainable.

Whatever the truth of its decline, according to Professor Jack Stratton Hawley, elements of Harappan civilization entered the mainstream of "Indian" civilization as it has developed over the last few thousand years. A polytheistic approach to popular religion has endured. The use of the bull, the cobra, the pipal, and other natural motifs as powerful symbols has continued to varying extents in the arts and literature of Hinduism, Jainism, and Buddhism. The Harappan tendency to depict the object of veneration on a raised platform continues in these three religious traditions as does the use of (yogic) postures clearly discernible on ancient Harappan tablets. The plumpness of Harappan female figurines became the enduring ideal of feminine beauty in the Indian sculptural tradition. (SR4/TN2) Harappa's apparent emphasis on ritual bathing and cleanliness continues to echo in Hindu worship traditions as does the use of meaning-conveying hand gestures called mudras.

The Arrival and Impact of the Aryans

By about 1200 B.C.E., successive waves of Aryan tribes had invaded northern India. Originating in central Asia, the Aryans moved west (into Europe) and south over a period of several hundred years after about 2000 B.C.E. They spoke a language which subsequently became the base for most languages in Europe and India and is thus called Indo-European. They were generally nomadic pastoralists for whom cattle were an important measure of wealth and power*, and cattle were probably their primary goal as they first began to make raids through passes in the Hindu Kush. Their iron weapons and horse-drawn chariots gave them a marked military advantage over the far more numerous local population, called Dravidians. Following the Ganges east, the Aryans gradually established themselves as conquerors across northern India although the more rugged terrain of southern India remained in Dravidian control. (SR5)

As nomads, the Aryans had not attained a high level of material culture, but they evolved belief and social systems which suited their needs. They worshipped a variety of primarily nature gods of whom Indra, god of the sky/storms, was paramount. Sacrifice was vital to their religion, and Agni, god of fire, was important as intermediary between the gods and their followers. Aryan men were ranked in four basic groups according to their job and its relative importance to the communal good. In this scheme of things, rulers (rajahs), warriors, and hunters were most important. Priests and seers were second; craftsmen and herdsmen were third; servants were at the bottom of Aryan society. A woman's status generally reflected that of her father or her husband.

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*Reverence for cattle in Hindu India probably reflects the importance of cattle in early Aryan society. Cows are an on-going source of food in the form of milk from which many other foods can be made. Dried cow dung is also a useful cooking fuel -- reducing the need for wood and the danger of massive deforestation in the second most populous nation on earth.

Conquest and the adoption of a sedentary lifestyle brought important changes to the Aryans as well as to the Dravidian population in India. New vocations developed which had no place in the original social system. In addition, the Aryans recognized the potential vulnerability of being so outnumbered by those whom they had conquered. An awareness of differences in language and appearance also caused the Aryans to look down upon the Dravidians. By keeping themselves literally separate from the Dravidians, the Aryans hoped to maintain themselves as a distinct, racially pure, ethnic element ruling India. Over time, religious justifications were added to political and racial ones: separation would keep the Aryans free from the spiritual "pollution" of contact with their inferiors. In response to these concerns, an increasingly strict system of social divisions and segregation evolved based on birth and occupation, the varna (literally "color") system.* Western writers have tended to use the term "caste" first used by the Portuguese to describe India's system of social organization.

The caste system accomodated changes within Aryan society and served to keep non-Aryans in a position of social inferiority. Although there was considerable warfare between the Aryan states which developed in northern India, sedentary life somewhat diminished the overall position of the warrior-hunters (kshatriyas) in Aryan society. Hunting, for example, became more of a sport than a necessity. At the same time, however, the Aryans were cognizant of their good fortune in having successfully conquered northern India and wanted to maintain the favor of their gods as one way to maintain this position. Changing social roles and values worked to augment the position of the priests (Brahmins) by way of their monopoly on the rites of sacrifice, the basis of Aryan religion. Thus, over time, the two upper elements of Aryan society changed places although both constituted Aryan-Indian nobility. The commoner varnas came to include merchants, craftsmen, and farmers (Vaisyas) and all types of unskilled or unfree Aryan labor (Sudras).

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*It is to be noted that the term "color" did not refer primarily to the color of skin although the Aryans are thought to have been fair in their complexion whereas Dravidians tend to be darker-complected. Instead, the term refers to colors of clothing which were restricted to certain varnas, or castes. Only the warriors could wear red, for example; the priests, white; the merchants/craftsmen, yellow; the hired help, black. Very specific prescribed rules (dharma) regarding appropriate economic activities, social and familial responsibilities, and marriageability. Such prescriptions and penalties for trangressions were summarized in various editions of which the Code of Manu dating is probably the best known.

It should be noted that the vision of a society based on this varna system reflected a conceptual notion of the way things ought to be according to the Brahmin men. (SR6/TN3) In reality, the system was not as fixed as it sounds, and, over centuries of living side by side, the vast majority of the Aryans were absorbed into the larger body of the Indian population. The system acquired the force of custom and tradition, however, and continues to influence relations between Indians in the modern age despite having been outlawed by India's 1948 Constitution. A glance at the Matrimonial Classifieds of the India Tribune is instructive in this regard. Habits and attitudes ingrained over millenia die slowly. (SR7) Because political unity eluded the Aryans and their descendants, the varna system (and Hinduism as it evolved) provided a measure of socio-cultural unity to the Indian way of life. Politically, a patchwork of feuding princely states developed across Aryan-conquered northern India as well as in the Dravidian south until the third century B.C.E.

Hinduism

The term "Hindu" originally referred to the land east of the Indus River and the people who lived on it. "Hinduism" is a nineteenth century term coined to describe the various beliefs and practices of the majority of those inhabitants of the subcontinent who look upon the Vedas (and subsequent interpretations of them) as the revealed truth about the Universe and humankind's place and purpose in it. It must be understood that the term does not describe a single or uniform body of worshippers. Although there are several ideas common to most Hindus, there is a great variety of belief and practice which goes by the name of Hinduism. There is neither a single authoritative scriptural source nor a hierarchically organized clergy to provide theological consistency. It is also important to note that Hinduism is more than a religion in the modern Western sense of that term; it is a way of life, a philosophy which gives meaning and purpose to the daily existence of some 700 million people on the planet. What follows is a somewhat simplified overview of notions and practices basic to "Hinduism."

Like the varna system, Hinduism evolved over time and likely represents a blending of Aryan and Dravidian deities, practices, and beliefs despite the realities of conquest and caste. Rather like those of their Greek and Roman "cousins", the Aryans' gods were arranged in a pantheon in which male deities tended to dominate. The Aryans' Indra is much like the Greeks' Zeus, for example, a sky god regarded as the most powerful of the various gods who intervenes regularly in human affairs.

The textual foundations of Hinduism are the Vedas, the four main scriptures of the Aryans, of which the Rig-Veda is the first and oldest.* Regarded as being the original words of the gods, the Vedas were transmitted orally through generations of (Brahmin) priests until being written down in the several hundred years after the Aryan conquests in India (circa 1200 to 800 B.C.E.). The Vedas include hymns, poems, legends, rituals, and guidance for daily living. In the roles they play, there is some similarity between the Vedas and the Bible or the Quran. Each of these provides guidance for daily and spiritual living to the faithful. Each has been the subject of multiple (re-)interpretations by later generations. Like the Vedas, the Quran represents the actual words of God (as dictated to Muhammed), while the Bible contains some of God's words, in the form of the Ten Commandments, for example.

There are also significant differences between these religious texts that go beyond mere differences of content, however. The Vedas developed over a much longer period of time than either the Bible or the Quran and do not present the same degree of consistency of ideas. Issues, such as the original creation of the Universe, treated as being without doubt in the Rig Veda are themselves questioned in the later Vedas. Such Vedic inconsistencies are compounded by the fact that some reinterpretations of the Vedas are themselves ancient. Most are older than either the Old and New Testaments, and virtually all are older than the Quran. Such works have acquired a legitimizing antiquity in their own right. While the Vedas do represent the ancient basis of Hinduism, therefore, they no longer represent a singular, authoritative source of doctrines or practices. Modern Hindus would likely turn first to any number of more recent interpretations (such as the Upanishads) than to the Vedas for guidance and inspiration.

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*The Rig-Veda is the oldest religious text in continual use in the world.

Ritual sacrifice through fire, performed and presided over by Brahmin priests, was the basis of early Vedic religion. The original sacrifice of the "Cosmic Person" by the gods was understood as the origin of the Universe. (SR8/TN4) Ritual sacrifice re-enacted this early Vedic account and ensured the continued orderly existence of the Universe. Ritual sacrifice was also understood as being a sort of hospitality offered to the gods (although generally only one god was honored at any given sacrifice) in the hope of some return gesture from them, including an eternal life to follow this earthly existence in a divine paradise among the gods. Here again, some parallels with Greek and Roman beliefs are evident. The sponsoring of sacrifice by kshatriyas and the performance of sacrifice by Brahmins were also important ways by which these two "noble" classes could publicly demonstrate their piety and legitimize their social positions. While they may have originally used human beings in such rites, by the time of their conquests in India, the Aryans generally used animals -- often in quite large numbers -- as their sacrificial victims.

By about 700 B.C.E., however, a period of intense spiritual ferment began in India as elsewhere, the so-called Axial Age. In India, in particular, the emphasis on sacrifice began to be broadly questioned. Sacrifice was an expensive burden on all non-Brahmin castes in that much of the sponsoring kshatriyas' wealth came from taxes on the lower castes. In addition, the Brahminic emphasis on sacrifice and ancient magical rites known only to them seemed self-serving. It left most non-Brahmins seeking something more meaningful and directly accessible. It is noteworthy that members of the kshatriya varna generally led this quest for increased spirituality in India. Some retired from Brahminic society, taking to the forests to lead simple lives of meditation and prayer. Others, notably the Jain Mahavira and the Buddha abandoned the Vedas altogether and developed alternative explanations of the nature of the

Universe and the nature and purpose of human existence.

For those who stayed within "the Vedic tradition", a series of writings over the next several hundred years, the Upanishads,* reinterpreted earlier beliefs and practices placing an emphasis on knowledge, understanding, and conduct rather than on ritual sacrifice. The authors of these works accepted that there was no rational way to know the origin of the Universe. They concentrated instead on trying to make sense of human existence in its own right and in the larger context of time and space. These forest-dwelling thinkers identified an ultimate "reality" behind creation, an unborn and uncreated spirit, Brahman, which permeates the Universe. (SR9/TN5) This all-pervasive universal force has qualities or attributes (Saguna Brahman) which are reflected in the myriad aspects of creation. Some Upanishadic authors described Brahman as lacking qualities (Nirguna Brahman), however, that is, lacking qualities which humans can comprehend given the limits of rational thought. For these authors, Brahman is generally described in terms of what it is _not_. This issue points again to the difficulty of trying to understand Hinduism in terms of one single set of understandings!

In the Upanishadic tradition, a part of Brahman, _atman_ (sometimes thought of as a Hindu "soul"), is found in each sentient living thing.** The physical body acts as a sort of vessel for _atman_, and when the one body dies, the _atman_ migrates into a new one. The goal of proper living in this rethought tradition is no longer an afterlife with the gods in some sort of heaven, but the rejoining of _atman_ to Brahman, of the individual to the universal and eternal. For, despite its seeming permanence, the world of the senses is transient and impermanent, an illusion (_maya_). All living things (and even the Vedic gods according to the authors of the Upanishads) are bound in a virtually endless cycle of birth, life, and redeath called _samsara_. Only by knowing and understanding this reality can the individual act in ways which will purify himself* in order to achieve eventual release (moksha) from samsara, thereby joining atman to Brahman once and for all time.

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*The Upanishads are actually part of a larger series of philosophical speculations known as the Aranyakas, or "forest books", given their authors' literal and figurative dwelling place outside the (then) prevailing Brahmanic traditions.

**Respect for the presence of _atman_ in animals is one reason why many Hindus are vegetarian. Respect for life is also reflected in the practice of _ahimsa_, or non-violence, towards other beings of which Gandhi was probably the best-known modern proponent. _Ahimsa_ is also a central tenet of Jainism and Buddhism, the "heterodox" religions of India.

The concept of karma, a sort of moral law of cause and effect, both explains samsara and helps explain how to get out of the continuing cycle of existence. All physical and mental actions -- whether good or evil -- generate effects sooner or later, in this life (incarnation) and/or the next. (SR10/TN6) Living according to dharma, that which is socially and morally appropriate for one's present incarnation, will likely improve one's next incarnation, perhaps as a member of a higher caste. What is important here, however, is not the enhanced social prestige or material wealth which might attend higher caste membership, but the greater purity of the atman so that it moves towards moksha. Failure to live according to one's present dharma will likely lead to reincarnation at the same or a lower level of existence,** thus perpetuating the cycle of life and redeath.

As the Hindu conception of time is endless and cyclical, there is no fixed timetable for the liberation of atman. In a sense, atman flows towards Brahman as the Ganges flows to the Bay of Bengal -- fast in some stretches, slow in others, but generally moving forward despite whirlpools and eddies. For each individual, progress is determined by the interplay of dharma and karma in each incarnation. Most Hindus act on their understanding of karma by doing their best to live according that dharma which is appropriate to varna and jati. By doing so, the individual acknowledges acceptance of the reality of samsara and acceptance of the responsibility to live rightly in order to move closer to eventual moksha.

Still, in order to obtain moksha, to get free of samsara once and for all, one must get completely free of actions and their inevitable lingering effects. This aspect of karma helps explain the strong ascetic tradition for which Hinduism is so well known (as are Jainism and Buddhism). The ascetic renounces the usual responsibilities of a Hindu lay person and dedicates his or her life to the more immediate achievement ofmoksha through a lifetime of study and meditation. By giving up family, position, and possessions, the ascetic detaches as much as possible from the world of the senses. For these dedicated types, the public ritual sacrifice of the earlier Vedic religion became an inner, spiritual experience in which the usual sense of what it means to be human is sacrificed, i.e., given up, to Brahman. The heat of the ancient sacrificial fire was replaced by the spiritual heat of intense personal asceticism.

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*In traditional Hindu belief, a female cannot obtain moksha as a female; she must be reincarnated in a male body.

**Once one is incarnated as a human being, however, s/he would not usually revert to a non-human incarnation; to repeat life as an "untouchable" was thought to be sufficiently undesirable.

Men of the three upper castes traditionally combined elements of both of theses approaches, that of living according to dharma and that of asceticism. Males of these three castes are called "twice-born" in that they undergo the sacrament of the sacred thread in late childhood. The thread serves as a visual reminder of their superior social standing as well as their purer spiritual status (and the responsibilities which accompany it). Men of these castes were expected to live this life in "four plus one" stages. In the first stage, childhood, boys are generally indulged, having few responsibilities or cares. After the investiture with the sacred string, however, the boy is expected to become a dedicated student -- of Veda, of dharma, and of specific social and economic skills necessary in adult life. The third stage is that of the householder. As husband, father, and producer of goods and/or services, the man fulfills his responsibility to the larger human community of which he is a part. It is during this stage of his life that a Hindu man can properly pursue the "three ends of man": righteous living (dharma), material gain (artha), and pleasure (kama). Once his children are grown and his wife is provided for, however, the traditionally "proper" Hindu male dedicated himself to individual spirituality by embracing the lifestyle of an ascetic. The fifth, or "plus one", stage is that of the striver (sramana) who abandons temporal attachments in the quest for moksha at the end of the current incarnation. Whether or not this is achieved, the individual who has lived according to this overall dharma should be reincarnated in a better spiritual position, one more capable of achieving moksha.

It should be noted that women of all castes are traditionally considered to be in the care of and under the authority of their male relatives throughout their lives. As a girl, she is subject to her father's decisions. As a wife, the woman is expected to defer to her husband. As a matter of day-to-day reality, however, this often means that a woman is subject to her husband's mother's, i.e., her mother-in-law's, authority! As a widow, a woman typically finds herself in the home of her eldest son and subject to his judgment. Once again, this is not a fixed reality , but one which changes between families and over time. Traditionally, however, the woman who has lived according to this dharma should also be reincarnated in a purer, more spiritually advanced position, presumably as a male.

A third approach to the freeing of atman from bondage to samsara developed first in southern India in the early centuries of the Common Era. Called bhakti, this method of "salvation" relies upon intense personal devotion to and identification with one of the principal gods, typically Shiva or one of Vishnu's avatars, with less reliance on formal rituals. These gods had been fully accepted into the "Hindu" pantheon by this era. (SR11) Bhakti's focus on one of the gods probably represents another attempt to make basic beliefs of Hinduism accessible and meaningful to larger numbers of people, not just the upper castes. That bhakti is usually expressed in local vernaculars rather than in Classical Sanskrit, the language of Veda and of the educated upper castes, reinforces this popular aspect as does the fact that many of India's best-known "poet-saints", male and female, were of low caste origins.

Bhakti may also be a spontaneous Hindu response to the devotion which Buddhists could feel towards the actual historic personnage of the Buddha. Bhakti devotion can take many forms: a romantic, almost-erotic love; the love of a parent (the devotee) for a child (the god); the love between friends; the selfless love of service. A devotee may express these different forms at different times in his or her life or combine elements of all of them at any given moment. In whatever way it is expressed, the blessings of the god are thought to be conferred upon the bhakti devotee, thereby hastening the devotee's achievement of moksha. (SR12/TN7) It should be noted that the earlier Upanishadic reinterpretations of the Vedas and the later rise of bhakti represent the efforts of individuals to find greater spiritual relevance in their lives. Neither of these developments within "Hinduism" represents the conscious program of some single religious establishment or authority. The Brahmins came to terms with these developments over time and were, in part, influenced by them: they were not, however, the original sponsors.

It is very important to note how the evolution of the traditional varna system and the development of Hinduism reinforce one another. The social position into which one is born came to be understood as a reflection of one's spiritual attainment. As the atman draws nearer to unification with Brahman, its physical incarnations advance from animal to human form, then from lower caste to upper caste within human society. The physical incarnation becomes more learned, more socially esteemed, and more spiritually pure as the self more fully realizes the internalized presence (atman) of the eternal (Brahman). In traditional Indian society, to trangress against the dharma appropriate for one's place in the caste system, therefore, was both anti-social and anti-religious. Such transgressions carried harsh penalties in this life as well as karmic consequences for subsequent incarnations. The overlapping of these two idea-systems also helps explain the endurance of caste-based attitudes in modern India.

Hindu Gods and Worship

There are literally hundreds, probably thousands of "Hindu" deities, all of which have come to be understood as embodiments of various aspects of Brahman. It is important to understand this underlying unity to all of the deities, however, in that it helps explain the harmony which exists between devotees of different Hindu gods as well as the tolerance which Indians have traditionally shown towards non-Hindu religions. An important notion which dates from the Rig-Veda suggests that there is one Truth though wisemen speak of it in different ways: "Ekam Sat: Vipra Bahudha Vadanti".

There are two main "trinities" (trimurti) In Hinduism. The traditional Classical trinity includes three male deities and reflects the male dominance of early religion and society: Brahma, the Creator (not to be confused with Brahman which is the great force behind all gods, all life, the universe); Vishnu, the Preserver and Protector; and Shiva, the Destroyer and Recreator. The roles which these three play embody the stages of samsara, thus forming a sort of cyclical unity, but the roles also address the maintenance of order in the Universe. In the early centuries of the Common Era, however, a different "trinity" evolved retaining Vishnu and Shiva, but substituting "the Goddess" or "Great Goddess (Devi or Mahadevi) for Brahma. According to Hindu mythology, the gods created the Goddess so that she could defeat a demon so powerful that they themselves had not been able to overcome it! Lesser gods and goddesses and regional gods and goddesses also abound in the Hindu pantheon. The elephant-headed Ganesh(a) is probably the most popular of these. He is the son of Shiva and is thought of as the god of travelers, of new beginnings, of obstacles -- both creating and removing them, and of sweets, among other things.

Hindu gods take many forms (avatars) as they intercede in earthly affairs bestowing blessings on their devotees and battling demons and disorder. Each has a distinctive iconography which helps identify the deities and reminds their devotees of the powers and stories associated with each. (SR13) The use of mudras allows the deities to "speak" to their devotees. (SR14) Dramatic painted eyes, the last touch added to a statue before its dedication in a temple (and typically absent from museum statues of Hindu deities), allow the deity to "see" its devotees. Most Hindus are primarily followers of one main god as well as of other lesser, local deities although on holidays special to a particular deity, most Hindus will likely give worship to that deity whether or not it is their principal deity.

Worship, puja, in Hinduism occurs daily -- at household shrines and at public temples of which there are thousands all over India. In its most straightforward interpretation, puja involves treating the deity as one would treat an honored houseguest; it is a specialized form of hospitality. The deity's scuplted image is awakened, dressed, garlanded with flowers, offered food and drink, moved from one spot to another in order to participate in special events, and put to rest in the evening.

There are many styles of worship, but there are several specific aspects common to most. Puja usually begins with the ritual washing of the worshipper. In this, the Hindu concern for ritual cleanliness reminds of that of the Indus River civilization. The worshipper next bathes the image of deity -- in water, milk, or clarified butter (called ghee). The devotee next bows or kneels to the deity which is thought to be physically present in his or her image at the time of devotion. Called pranam, this is a symbolic gesture of respect on the part of the devotee. Standing again, the worshipper offers fire (a lit candle or lamp), food, incense, flowers, and verbal offerings (mantras). This aspect of puja reminds of the ancient Aryan (and Vedic) practice of ritual fire sacrifice to the gods. Prayers are offered next, including expressions of gratitude and requests for continued blessings to come. After this, that which was offered to the deity is shared with those present at the puja. It is understood that the deity has partaken of the offering and thereby sanctified it. Called prasad, the ingesting of these divine "leftovers" is, thus, purifying for humans. Because the deity is believed to be present in its image, the devotee is also blessed by looking upon the image and being "seen" by the deity. This darshan, or spiritual seeing, can also be achieved at holy sites and from specific holy people.

The pattern of public worship at a temple is quite similar. As a general rule, however, temple attendants handle the bathing, clothing, and garlanding of statues. Similarly, the prasad from temple worship is usually shared among the temple's attendants as well as with poor people of the neighborhood. It is also worth noting that, while the worshipper generally comes to the temple for puja and darshan, on special occasions, deity statues (or replicas of them) are paraded through the streets where they are joyously received by the faithful the way fans might welcome a rock star or a victorious athletic team! Such occasions confer blessings upon the entire community and often draw people from surrounding towns and villages as well.

Hinduism and Indian Culture

Hinduism has had an enormous and enduring impact on virtually all expressions of Indian culture. Classical Indian architecture, sculpture, literature, painting, and dance all depict aspects of Hindu beliefs and philosophy. Modern culture continues to draw heavily upon this source of inspiration. According to Michael Wood, for example, the most popular television series in modern India is a serialized version of the Ramayana, the epic story of Rama, an avatar of Vishnu, and that of his devoted wife, Sita.

Using symbols which were and remain popularly legible within Indian culture, sculptors, artists, and performers draw upon the faith and understanding of their audiences. At the same time, however, they provide that audience with the opportunity for fresh insights and deeper understanding as familiar images are contemplated anew. In sculpture, paintings, and dance, for example, divine beings are generally portrayed as idealized human forms although depictions of multi-limbed, multi-headed deities are not uncommon. These latter depictions dramatically and graphically underscore the powers, the intelligence, and the vision of the gods. Shiva Nataraga (Lord of the Dance) is an excellent example of this sort of multi-layered symbolic representation. Deities are usually portrayed with calm, handsome countenances, but they may be depicted with frightful features as well. This can be confusing to a viewer from outside the Hindu tradition, but it is one way of communicating the concept of unity (one god) behind apparently contradictory aspects (different visages or different avatars) which is important to the Hindu understanding of reality. As noted above, specific iconographic elements differentiate between the deities, particularly Shiva and Vishnu (and their avatars), whose visual appearance may be quite similar otherwise. (SR13)

Animal deities are another common subject matter for the arts, and they also serve a didactic purpose. As mentioned above, the elephant-headed Ganesh(a) is probably the most popular of all Indian gods. His physical size suggests his power, and elephants are traditionally associated with royalty in South and Southeast Asia. Yet he is paired with a rat, the apparent antithesis of an elephant in terms of size, strength, and social prestige. The seeming contradiction is resolved when one considers that Ganesh is the god of obstacles and must be stong enough to batter them down or small and agile enough to get around them. Other animal deities derive from Hindu mythology. The monkey god, Hanuman, for example, played a critically important role as Rama's ally in the Ramayana. In the story, Hanuman miraculously stretched his body across the strait of water which separates southern India from Sri Lanka. Rama used Hanuman's body as a bridge in order to invade the island and reclaim his beloved wife (Sita) who had been kidnapped by the demon-king Ravenna. Vishnu himself takes the form of various animals in some of his ten avatars. The origins of Hinduism's special reverence for animals probably lie in the religious traditions of the ancient Indus River civilization which fused with the Aryans' special regard for cattle. The widespread artistic depiction of animal deities reminds viewers of the presence of the divine (Brahman) in all sentient beings and again reminds of the underlying unity behind the diversity of creation.

In addition to its influence on much of the content of the visual arts in India, Hinduism also affects shape, media used, and even color use. Because most temple statuary is positioned in niches or used in ornamental relief, the backs of statues are generally left unsculpted. As a result, there is relatively little free-standing Indian sculpture in the round. Similarly, Indian sculptors tended to use durable materials such as stone or bronze for the fashioning of statues of the gods. There is perhaps a suggestion of divine permanence in the use of such materials in contrast to the impermanence of human existence. To a lesser extent, certain Hindu conventions also influence the use of color in the visual arts. Krishna's skin, for example, is usually depicted as being purplish. Since Shiva is associated, in part, with death and cremation, he is often depicted as literally ashen.

Hinduism has also had a great influence on Indian architecture. In fact, almost all of Classical India's surviving stone architecture is in the form of temples scattered across India. At one level of understanding, the temples are intended to be homes, really palaces, for the different gods and goddesses as they sojourn on earth. Temples are also intended to be places where humans can transcend the seeming reality of the material world, and every detail about the temple -- from its location and orientation to its design and ornamentation -- is intended to aid this process of transcendence and understanding. Statues of deities in niches on inner and outer walls provide many opportunities for darshan. Tiers of exterior bas-reliefs visually represent the universe: humans engaged in various day-to-day activities occupy the lower ranks while deities predominate as the eye moves upward. As might be expected given the overall diversity of belief and practice in Hinduism, there is no one single temple design style (in contrast, for example, to the generally cruciform cathedrals of medieval Christianity). Some temples are extremely minimalist; others very ornate. Some are constructed, i.e., built above ground; others are excavated from cliff walls or cut into bedrock. To generalize architecturally, however, northern Indian temples tend to be somewhat more compact and generally emphasize verticality whereas the so-called temple-villages of southern India have a sort of sprawling horizontality. (TN8)

Hinduism's myths and beliefs also inspired much of Classical India's literature. India's two great epics, the Mahabharata and the Ramayana, give leading roles to avatars of Vishnu, Krishna and Rama, respectively. Both works deal directly with the centrality of dharma as the key to a smoothly functioning, spiritually progressive life -- whether for the individual or for the whole of Hindu society. The Mahabharata tends to use dialogue to makes its points while Rama in the Ramayana is, in effect, dharma incarnate. His example as husband and ruler set the standard for proper fulfillment of both these roles by human males. Similarly, the devotion of Rama's wife, Sita, has been taken as the ideal for Hindu women to emulate. The influence of bhakti on India's poetic tradition was noted above.

Even in what might be considered more "secular" literature, Hindu themes of dharma and karma abound. The works of India's great Classical playwright, Kalidasa, tend to focus on these themes as they unfold in human lives. His characters are generally firm in fulfilling their moral duties whatever the apparently adverse circumstances which result from this. One of his best-known plays, Shakuntala, demonstrates the happy endings that are the reward for living rightly. Kalidasa's regular inclusion of supernatural appearances and divine interventions also underscores the traditional Hindu acceptance of such occurrences in the lives of the devoted. (SR15/TN9) Popular folktales also teach lessons of dharma. Some, such as Savitri, offer an interesting look at the traditional position of women in Hindu society as well. (SR16/TN10)

Modern India continues to embrace this literature. Most of the classics of Hindu religion and literature are available in a series from the Amar Chitra Katha publishing company. Presented in an almost comic book format, new additions are regular sell-outs in India and in overseas Indian communities. The popularity of a television version of the Ramayana was noted above. And even for non-Hindus, the Bhagavad-Gita, an excerpt from the much longer Mahabharata in which Krishna explains the functioning of dharma to a young prince about to do battle with kinsmen, remains India's best-known contribution to world literature. (SR17/TN11)

Jainism

Introduction and the Life of Mahavira

Although the majority of India's inhabitants embraced the Upanishadic re-interpretation of the ancient Vedas, others looked for other explanations of the Universe and the purpose of human existence. Accordingly, some became followers of Mahavira, the "great hero" of Jainism who lived from about 598 to 524 B.C.E. The Jains believe that Mahavira was the last in a series of twenty-four _jinas_, or conquerors of _samsara_ for the present world age; the Jains are the followers of these _jinas_. Until recently, Jainism is a religious and philosophic way of life which has been largely confined to India, where a little under five million people presently call themselves Jains.* There is an especially strong monastic tradition in Jainism. Its monks and nuns live according to such a strict physical and spiritual discipline that they have been called "radical ascetics." In a culture such as India's which values asceticism in the quest for spiritual liberation, however, the Jains have earned a position of respect which is dispropotionate to their relatively small numbers. Some key Jain ideas influenced Hinduism in its continuing evolution during the last centuries before the Common Era, but the Jains have remained as a distinct community within larger Indian society.

Modern Jainism is split between two main sects: the Svetambaras and the Digambaras. There is little subsectarian variation among the considerably less numerous Digambaras while the Svetambaras are divided into three subsects. There are no major differences of belief between the sects and subsects, but there are some differences of practice and religious identity. Digambara ("sky-clad") monks generally go nude, for example, literally following the example of Mahavira and the earlier _jinas_. Svetambara ("white-clad") monks wear robes. Nuns of both orders wear clothes, however, as it is felt that nudity would detract from the nuns' ability to pursue their spiritual quest. A second difference in practice which is noteworthy is that, within the Svetambara community, the larger sects use images (_murtis_) in the _puja_ whereas the smallest sect does not.

Mahavira was born to a _kshatriya_ family in central India. In the traditional account of his life, however, his soul first entered the womb of a Brahmin woman. Indra, king of the Vedic gods, realized that *jinas* are always born into the *kshatriya* caste and set out to correct the apparent error. After doing homage to the future *jina* and offering a lengthy song of praise*, Indra arranged for the soul to be relocated to the womb of a *kshatriya* queen. Indra did homage again after the boy's birth, magically taking the child to Mt. Meru at the center of the Indic universe. There, the boy, named Vardhamana, was bathed and honored by the assembled Vedic gods (as they are bathed and honored in the Hindu *puja*). This account of Vardhamana's birth immediately establishes the symbolic subordination of these gods to the message of Jainism. The account also mocks Brahmin affectations of superior spiritual purity: Vardhamana's original placement in a Brahmin womb is explained as the karmic consequence of some misdeed in one his previous incarnations!

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*India's 1948 Constitution makes no distinctions between Hindus, Jains, or Buddhists, however, referring to all three as Hindus.

Vardhamana grew into an extraordinarily precocious and sensitive child. Jain mythology recounts that, in utero, he had remained very still in order to avoid causing his mother any pain. The absence of motion made her fear that the child withi her had died, however, and she became despondent. Sensing this, the miraculous infant moved, but just a little. Seers had prophesized that the boy would be either a great miilitary conqueror or a conqueror of the spirit. Although he was groomed to follow his father as ruler, Vardhamana's special karma had predetermined that he would be a spiritual leader. In order to spare his parents the pain of being separated from their beloved son, however, Vardhamana postponed his renunciation of material attachments until after their deaths. Tradition recounts that it took a year for him to give away all his possessions, but, having done so, Vardhamana left the palace, threw off his clothes, pulled out his hair, and went into the forests. Like the authors of the Upanishads, Vardhamana, thus, withdrew from Brahminic society. He spent twelve years as an ascetic in the wilderness, ridding his soul of all lingering *karma* through prolonged fasting and meditation.

Having liberated himself from the cycle of *samsara*, however, Vardhamana postponed *moksha* for thirty years in order to teach others his way of liberation, thus becoming the "great hero", Mahavira. At a special convocation of all the gods, all people, and all animals, Mahavira

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*Called the *Shakra Stava*, this hymn is still sung by Jain mendicants as part of their morning and evening devotions.

preached his first sermon. All beings simultaneously understood him, each in its own method of communication, symbolically demonstrating the universality of his message. At about the age of seventy four, Mahavira's soul gave up the material body and rose to the highest level of the Jain universe where it dwells for all eternity in a sort of splendid detachment from the affairs of the material world. At the time of this ascension, Mahavira is said to have left a religious community of 36,000 nuns and 14,000 monks to preach and act as exemplars for others to follow.

Jain Beliefs and Ascetics

While the Jains share a vocabulary with Hinduism and share a common goal of getting free from samsara, the two religious traditions differ in several important ways. All Jains embrace the same basic dharma which Mahavira preached and demonstrated. This is in marked contrast to the caste/jati-specific dharmas of Hinduism. The strictness of adherence to this dharma varies somewhat in Jainism depending on whether one is a mendicant or a member of the laity, but, for all Jains, the practice of ahimsa (non-violence) is the moral imperative which governs existence. This fundamental tenet was probably the clearest way to signal Jainism's rejection of Brahminic ways, including the Vedas and ritual sacrifice. The Jains' concept of the soul also differs from that of Hinduism, and they have a somewhat different sense of what karma is and how it affects the soul. Women hold a place of greater spiritual equality with men than they do in Hinduism. And lastly, while Hinduism is polytheistic, Jainism is technically atheistic (although aspects of Jain puja closely resemble that of Hinduism).

The vow of ahimsa is the first of the five great vows (mahavratas) of Jain ascetics. For the Jains, ahimsa means much more than the rejection of mere physical violence. All mendicants (and many of the laity) take a "thrice three-fold" vow to renounce violence -- violence committed by them, committed for them by others, or condoned by them; violence in thought, word, and deed; violence in the past, the present, and the future. This latter aspect of the vows expresses regret for violence which may have been committed in previous incarnations and expresses the hope that no new violence will be committed in future incarnations. The Jain identification with and compassion towards other living things is a clear expression of ahimsa and atonement for possible past misdeeds. (SR18-top)

The other four "thrice three-fold" vows include speaking only the truth, not taking what is not freely given, celibacy, and non-attachment (to things, people, or emotions).* (SR19) Taken together, the five vows are absolutes for Jain monks and nuns: they represent the words and example of Mahavira and the preceding jinas; they are not subject to periodic reinterpretation; and they must be followed to the best of one's ability. Speaking the truth and celibacy are obvious vows. Not taking what is not freely given reinforces the voluntary nature of the relationship between mendicants and the lay community. It requires the mendicants to be suitably, i.e., spiritually, worthy of the laity's support. It also establishes another clear difference between the practices of Jain mendicants and those of the Brahminic priests with their continuing demands for things to sacrifice.

The vow of non-attachment is expressed in many ways. Material possessions are given away immediately prior to the initiation ceremony. Initiates receive a robe, a staff, a hand-broom/whisk, a cloth mask for covering the mouth and nose, and a bowl for collecting alms. These are given by the order for the initiate's use during his or her lifetime. Spiritual ties to a guru replace emotional ties to family and friends. According to Professor John Cort, the initiation is a time of joy and sadness for family members. The decision to become a mendicant is highly respected in the Jain community (as it is in the broader Indian religious tradition). Such a decision also means that any continuing relationship with the initiate must reflect the guidelines for behavior between mendicants and the laity, not the guidelines for relations within a family. It also means that the mendicant will likely be gone for long periods of time, so joy is often tempered with a degree of sadness. A disregard for individual personal appearance and in the maintenance of an attitude of equanimity in the face of whatever may come one's way is another aspect of non-attachment. (SR18-bottom)

Non-attachment is also expressed in a very important philosophic notion within Jainism, the theory of manysidedness (anekantavada). In Jainism, pure souls are omniscient and can comprehend all aspects of reality simultaneously. When souls become encumbered with karma, however, they lose this ability and can only perceive certain elements which appear to be real at a given moment in time. The parable of the elephant and the six blind men makes this point quite clearly and suggests the vigor with which the limited view may be held. (SR20) By validating individual comprehensions of reality, the doctrine of manysidedness encourages a philosophic tolerance within the Jain community which may help explain the absence of serious heresies over Jainism's 2500 year history. It also encourages a tolerance towards other religious philosophies, acknowledging that these may have a partial view of the truth. By embracing the notion of manysidedness, the mendicant must demonstrate a non-attachment to his or her own notions of what is true, what is real. And, as Mahavira noted, it is often easier to give up one's possesssions than to give up one's opinions! Overall, most scholars seem to agree that the emphasis on ahimsa and this doctrine of manysidedness constitute Jainism's most important contributions to the broader Indian (and world) philosophic religious tradition. Jain influence on the ideas and career of Mohandas K. Gandhi is an obvious case in point.

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*The Jain Mahavratas closely resemble Buddhism's Five Noble Precepts, and both represent the desire to distinguish their mendicants' behavior and values from those of the Brahmins.

As the thrice three-fold nature of Jain vows suggests, Jain dharma is understood in an all-inclusive sense, and all aspects of the mendicants' lifestyle serve to reinforce their commitment to live accordingly. (TN12) The discipline demanded of Jain monks and nuns is extremely rigorous, and they must develop a sort of constant mindfulness of their thoughts, their words, and their actions. By doing so, mendicants hope to rid themselves of existing karma without accumulating additional karma in the process, thereby improving their spiritual position. As in Hinduism, reincarnation is the method by which the soul sheds karma over time.

While release from all karmic bondage is the eventual goal in Jainism as it is in Hinduism, the result of freedom from karmic bondage differs in Jainism. The Jains believe that the soul experiences existence on an individual basis. In contrast to Hinduism, it does not emerge from nor rejoin some cosmic totality. Souls are immortal, omniscient, and pure in their original state, but they become encumbered by karma, which, in the Jain conception of the term, is an almost physical substance, adhering to the soul, weighing it down, and impeding its capabilities. Through their vows and ascetic practices, mendicants try to generate the spiritual "heat" needed to burn off accumulated karma. Once this has been accomplished, the discrete soul rises to the top of the Jain universe where it exists in phenomenal space, but out of time -- eternally distinct from other liberated souls and utterly detached from the ongoing cares of the rest of the Universe. In contrast to the polytheism of Hinduism, therefore, Jainism is actually atheistic. The jinas are not gods. Having liberated themselves, they no longer concern themselves with or intervene in earthly matters. As Lawrence Babb has noted, however, Jainism combines a sort of "cognitive atheism" with an "affective theism". Jain devotees offer puja in front of statues of the jinas, giving thanks and asking blessings as if the jina were present in the statue to see and appreciate the offering. Jains may also address prayers to heavenly beings who remain in the Universe as well as to local deities of popular religion.

In Jainism, there is a sense of urgency to lead the religious life while one can. In order to get free of karma, the soul must make the deliberate, moral decision to live according to Jain dharma, but any soul's ability to make such a choice is circumscribed by conditions of space and time. As mentioned above, the Jains conceive of the Universe as existing in phenomenal space and time; that is, the Universe is real, not the illusion of reality as per Hinduism (and Buddhism). Conceived of vertically, the earthly plane exists as a wafer-thin band in the center of the Universe. Above it are seven levels of "heavens"; below it are seven levels of "hells". At the very top of this physical universe, above the seventh "heaven", is the domain of the perfected, liberated souls. Conditions are too idyllic in the celestial levels of the universe and too awful in the hells to make conscious moral choices; only a soul born into an earthly existence can make the decision to work toward liberation. In addition, while the Jains believe that souls on earth are housed in inanimate objects, plants, animals, and humans, only souls in human bodies have the possibility of achieving liberation.

Timing is also a limiting factor. The Jains perceive time in linear terms, in contrast to the Hindus' circular or cyclical sense of time. They see the Universe as having no beginning, i.e., no creation, and no end.* The Universe has always been in existence and always will be. Within the linear progression of time, however, are cyclical world-ages whose conditions affect whether or not individual liberation can be achieved. The image of a twelve-spoked wheel rolling forward may be helpful here.

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*Given Jainism's atheism, there is no supreme force or being responsible for creation, no Brahman, for example, from which to emerge.

During each rotation (world-age), the spokes go up for half the rotation, then down for the other half. At the top of the rotation, conditions on earth are so wonderful that moral decision-making is impossible; at the bottom, conditions are so dreadful that such decision-making is again impossible. Thus, only when the world is in the rising or falling midsection of the rotation do conditions exist in which an individual can choose to follow the Jain dharma to salvation.

The urgency to live the Jain religious life, as mentioned above, comes as a result of the need for the coincidence of these three factors: (re)birth on earth in a human body at an appropriate period in the world-age. According to Jain belief, three years and eight months after Mahavira's own liberation, the world moved into a period of the current world-age during which individual liberation is no longer possible . This does not diminish the need to do one's best now, however; the more karma that can be "burned off" in the present incarnation means less to be rid of in a subsequent incarnation at a more propitious time.

The Jain Laity

The laity is encouraged to take vows and live as closely to the mendicant lifestyle as possible, but lay people are not expected to adhere quite so strictly to the mendicants' behavioral guidelines. There are also somewhat different expectations of Jain laymen and laywomen in terms of the behaviors which constitute public evidence of right living. Lay men, in particular, are expected to contribute to various Jain temples and charitable institutions. Such donations demonstrate that the men are not attached to their wealth. Donations also publicly establish men as responsible, devout members of the Jain community which can be useful in business and even in arranging marriages for their children. Lay women, on the other hand, are generally expected to show their devotion through ritual fasting and daily worship at home and in public. That there are Jain nuns and specific religious expectations for Jain lay females highlights another significant difference between Jainism and Hinduism: escape from samsara does not depend on maleness. In fact, according to some Jain accounts, one of the jinas who preceded Mahavira was a woman.

In accordance with the moral imperative of ahimsa, the Jain laity generally eschews occupations which entail violence in the broadest sense of the word. In the Jain tradition, for example, farming is considered violent because it tears the earth and is disruptive of life on and below the surface of the soil. For many, this has meant careers in business and banking from which the Jain community has become extraordinarily wealthy. There is no condemnation of wealth as such although attachment to wealth, as attachments in general, leads to karmic accumulation.

The accumulation of vast wealth may seem paradoxical in a religious tradition which places such a high premium of asceticism, but there is a very practical side to this apparent contradiction. Having renounced their own possessions in imitation of Mahavira and the other jinas, the mendicants depend upon the support of the laity for all their basic material needs. Because proper intention can mitigate the effects of karma, it is permissible for the laity to do things for the mendicants which the mendicants cannot do for themselves. The cooking of food is probably the most obvious case in point. There is a certain amount of violence in the preparation of food: burning fires, chopping, boiling, the likelihood of microorganisms and insects being killed in the process. Such violence is contrary to the practice of ahimsa and results in karmic consequences. Because the mendicant has taken a vow of ahimsa, s/he cannot prepare food yet s/he must eat. The lay person will incure karmic consequences, but these will be moderated because the actions were committed for a worthy cause: feeding the mendicants. The material wealth of the lay community also builds temples and funds Jain charitable institutions, including hospices for animals. In return for the laity's support, the mendicants provide spiritual instruction and inspiration. They give hope that liberation from samsara is indeed possible.

The recurring symbol of the reciprocal nature of the relationship between Jain mendicants and the Jain laity is the clockwise swastika whose four branches represent the four divisions of Jain society: male mendicants, female mendicants, lay men, and lay women. In Jain imagery, this swastika is surmounted by three dots which symbolize the "three jewels" of right faith, right knowledge, and right conduct. The dots, in turn, are surmounted by a crescent, symbolizing the realm of the liberated souls at the top of the universe. Within the crescent, lastly, is a single dot representing the goal of all Jains: individual liberation from karma.

Buddhism and the Evolution of the Buddha Image

The Life of the Buddha

Buddhism dates from the sixth-fifth centuries B.C.E., an era of enormous intellectual and spiritual ferment in Eurasia. Called the "Axial Age," this is the era of Plato, Sophocles, Aeschylus, and Euripides in Greece; of Confucius and Lao-tzu in China; of Zoroaster (Zarathustra) in Persia; of many of the Hebrew Prophets; of Mahavira, the Upanishadic authors, Siddartha Gautama, the historic Buddha in India.

Although there are numerous variations, what follows is a general account of the Buddha's life. Gautama was born into the kshatriya caste, son of the local ruler, in about 563 B.C.E. in what is now Nepal on the southern slopes of the Himalayas. The circumstances of his birth immediately made clear that this was no ordinary infant. His mother had become pregnant as the result of a dream in which a white elephant had entered her side. Thereafter, his mother gave birth through her side while standing in a lumbini grove on the palace grounds. As such, his birth was virginal. Other factors marked the newborn Siddartha as a special person: he had several "auspicious marks" on his body (32 major ones and 64 minor ones to be precise) and took seven steps immediately after birth! The various aspects of the Buddha's conception and birth became a favorite subject matter in later Buddhist art. Sages and astrologers predicted that the young Gautama would be a conqueror -- of the world or the spirit. In an effort to guarantee that his son would follow him as a great ruler, Gautama's father kept the boy a virtual prisoner in the palace where he lived a life of luxury and indulgence, secluded from the lower castes and protected from the unpleasant aspects of life. He was groomed to become a ruler, and, in time, he married and fathered a son.

As a young man, however, through a combination of curiosity and mischievousness, Gautama escaped over the palace walls and, for the first time in his life, witnessed sickness, old age, poverty, and death as they existed among the populace. He was greatly saddened to realize what he and all whom he loved would have to endure, and he began to wonder about the meaning of life and the suffering it contained. On his trip over the wall, Gautama had also encountered a sadhu, an ascetic holy man, who seemed peaceful even in the face of these things. Deciding that asceticism must be the way to deal with life, Gautama decided to renounce his position, his wealth, his possessions, and his family, silently slipping out of the palace one night never to return. This episode, called The Great Renunciation, is another favorite subject for later Buddhist artists.

For the next six years, he wandered the countryside as an ascetic himself -- living in the forest and fasting for long periods of time in an effort to make sense of the meaning of life. His physical body was reduced to a frightful, emaciated frame which is sometimes depicted in later Buddhist art. Gautama began to be distracted from his spiritual pursuits by hunger and thirst, however, and when a young woman offered him rice one day, he accepted her gift and thereafter ate sparingly but regularly. Still determined to find meaning in life, Gautama decided to meditate. Assuming a cross-legged yogic position under a banyan tree, called a "bodhi" tree in India, Gautama began a meditation which was to last for forty-nine days. As his meditation brought him closer to understanding, however, Gautama became the object of the demon Mara's attention. Neither Mara nor the other demons had any wish for a human being to discover the true nature of existence, so Mara set out distract the meditating Gautama. Mara first tried to use his daughters, disguised as beauties, to draw Gautama's attention. When that failed, Mara tried to use furious winds and rainstorms to interrupt the meditations, but Gautama was protected from these by a nagaraja, or snake-king, who spread his multiple hoods over Gautama like an umbrella. In frustration, Mara himself set upon the former prince with an army of lesser demons. Fearing that he might at last succumb, Gautama called upon "mother earth" to aid him by reaching down from his meditative pose and touching the earth with his right hand. With the demons vanquished, Gautama's meditations led him to understand the cause of the suffering he had witnessed and the way to end such suffering. Various of these scenes of meditation and temptation are also common in the work of later Buddhist artists.

At this point in his life, Gautama became "the Buddha," the "awakened" one." He preached his first sermon to five friends at the deer park in the city of Sarnath, and for the next forty years (or so), he traveled across northern India preaching to anyone who chose to listen. He developed a large following of devotees in the course of these years and thus fulfilled the early prophecy of becoming a conqueror of the spirit. For this reason, he is also known as Shakyamuni, the sage of the Shakya clan. When he died, in approximately 483 B.C.E., his body was cremated as is the Indian custom. Small containers of his ashes were sent to Indian communities in which a significant Buddhist following existed where they were generally buried in large rounded mounds called stupas. These came to be pilgrimage and meditation sites for later generations of Buddhists. The Buddha's essence or spirit entered the state of nirvana, the Buddhist equivalent of moksha.

Buddhism

The Buddha lived at a time in India when many Indians were beginning to question the Brahmanic monopoly on access to the gods through sacrifice and reading the Vedas. Hindu society had coalesced into a fairly rigid caste system in which the Brahmans enjoyed the most status both socially and religiously. Only Brahman men could hope to achieve moksha, release from samsara, the cycle of continuing redeaths which the individual experiences as a result of the effects of karma. Brahman women and all other castes, the vast majority of the Indian population, were condemned to countless reincarnations and, therefore, to countless redeaths before moksha could be achieved. The Buddha was one of many Indians who came to reject the Brahmans and their religion.

In his quest for spiritual knowledge, the Buddha rejected both the luxury of Brahmanic society and the austerity of the ascetic way of life, such as that of the Jains. For this reason, Buddhism has come to be known as "the Middle Path." The Buddhist is expected to live "a life of good thoughts, good intentions, and straight living, all with the ultimate aim of achieving nirvana, release from earthly existence. While the end goal of Buddhism is rather like that of Hinduism in that both seek to escape the bondage of samsara for timeless union in disembodied bliss with the Universe, the two religions differ in significant ways. Perhaps most significant is the belief in Buddhism that "awakening" (and thus nirvana) can occur at any time in one's life and without regard to gender or to one's position in the social hierarchy. Even an untouchable, a member of the lowest tier of Hindu society, could achieve spiritual liberation if he or she followed the path of the Buddha. There is a sort of equality of spiritual potential in Buddhism which was attractive to many lower caste Indians.

Traditional Buddhism also differed from traditional Hinduism in that it did not involve any material sacrifice. In fact, there was no god to whom one might make sacrifice; Buddhism was and remains atheistic. Similarly, there was no priestly class to support as such, no specific scriptures to be recited, no specific rituals to be enacted. The way one lived one's day-to-day life was (and is) what is important in Buddhism. These aspects of Buddhism were also attractive to those who had little status and less to give as sacrifice.

Another important difference from Hinduism is to be found in the fact that, like Jainism's Mahavira, the Buddha was a living exemplar for the first Buddhists, an actual historical figure, not the product of myths and legends passed down over time. The experience of his life was proof positive that "awakening" was possible for non-Brahmans, indeed for anyone who lived as he lived and understood what he had come to understand. On the other hand, the failure or inability to do this would result in having to endure additional incarnations. Buddhism, thus, has the same understanding as Hinduism of what karma is and how it operates. Buddhists also share the belief with Hinduism that the material world is an illusion, transitory and unreal.

What did the Buddha understand and how did he live after achieving "awakening?" The core of traditional Buddhism is contained within the Four Noble Truths. The first of these acknowledges that suffering is universal; it is a part of life and living. The second Truth identifies the cause of suffering: attachment to the material self and to material things including other beings. Such attachments are bound to cause suffering because the object of the attachment is transitory, impermanent, subject to death and decay. The third Noble Truth affirms that the way to end suffering is to end these false attachments. The Fourth says that attachments can be ended by following the Eightfold Path (to spiritual awakening/nirvana).

Taken together, the elements of the "Eightfold Path" constitute the guide for living a Buddhist life. Some of the eight guidelines overlap with one another, and they are variously translated in different English-language editions. In the simplest version, the Eightfold Path consists of right thoughts, right intentions, right deeds, and right meditation. "Right thoughts", also called "right views," consist of understanding and accepting the Four Noble Truths. "Right intentions" consists of "right resolve," the dedication of one's self to the attainment of nirvana, and "right effort," the continuous need to keep the inner self free from evil or possessive thoughts. "Right deeds" includes "right speech," saying nothing that would hurt others, "right conduct," doing nothing that would hurt others, and "right livelihood,' dedicating one's self to a life of selflessness in the service of others. "Right meditation" includes "right mindfulness," constantly reminding one's self that cravings and desires are pointless, and "right concentration," meditating on the true nature of (spiritual) reality. The following schematic may be useful:

<u>The Eightfold Path</u>

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                       right views
                         /     \
              right resolve--------right effort
               /        \          /        \
right speech--------right conduct--------right livelihood
         \        /            \          /
         right mindfulness--------right concentation
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In addition, the so-called Five Precepts expand somewhat on what constitutes "right deeds" in a Buddhist's life. It is interesting to note that, like some of the Ten Commandments of the Old Testament, the Precepts are expressed in terms of negatives. A Buddhist does not take life. A Buddhist does not take what is not freely given. A Buddhist does not lie, does not take intoxicants, and is not unchaste. The similarity of Buddhism's Five Precepts to Jainism's Five Great Vows is unmistakable and reflects the desire by both of these "heterodox" religions to distinguish themselves clearly from the practices and values of the Brahmins.

Overall, then, there is a confidence in Buddhism that individual human misery <u>can</u> be dispelled through moderation in lifestyle and detachment from the illusory world of materiality. There is also clear recognition that this is not an easy path to tread; "strive onward vigilantly" are reputed to have been Buddha's last words. The experience of the Buddha in the first half of his life may give solace to the Buddhist who is struggling with the seeming reality of the surrounding material world as the serenity of the Buddha in the latter half of his life may give hope. It is important to note that Buddhism is not a revealed religion. The Buddha never claimed to be a god or even to be the interpreter of a god's ideas; he came to these conclusions as a result of his own efforts. For him, they represented the workings of natural laws of the Universe.

Ashoka and the Spread of Buddhism

The Buddha won thousands of converts during his lifetime. The work of preaching and example-setting was continued after his death by monks and nuns organized into communities called sanghas. Over the next several hundred years, Buddhism spread across northern India. Sites associated with the Buddha's life became pilgrimage sites, and stupas were built in considerable numbers. While various minor ruler embraced the tenets of Buddhism, the conversion of the third Mauryan emperor, Ashoka who reigned from 273 to 232 B.C.E. was of considerable importance for Buddhism's future.

Apparently inspired by Alexander the Great's empire and military career, the Mauryan dynasty (named after Chandragupta Maurya, Asoka's grandfather and a contemporary of Alexander's) was the first dynasty to unite virtually all of the Indian subcontinent. Using war elephants and massed archers to devastating effect, Mauryan rule was imposed from Afghanistan to the borders of modern Burma (Myanmar), from the Himalayas to the Deccan. Only the southern tip of India remained independent. Succeeding his grandfather and father, Ashoka added territories in the early years of his reign, rounding out the empire which held an estimated population of some 50 million subjects divided by geography, language, religion, and ethnicity. Originally known for the cruel efficiency of his domestic rule and the bloodiness of his ongoing conquests, Ashoka underwent a mid-life conversion to Buddhism for reasons which are not fully clear. Though tolerant of other religious traditions, Ashoka actively promoted Buddhism throughout his empire. His edicts were carved on rock walls and inscribed on pillars of stone for all to see and ponder as they traveled or went about their daily business. (SR21/TN13)

Ashoka himself set a personal example of Buddhist piety: wearing a monk's robes, abandoning hunting, embracing vegetarianism, and promoting non-violence (ahimsa) and religious toleration among his subjects. He dramatically reduced the size of his armies and put the decommissioned soldiers to work on a variety of public works: building roads; planting forests; building rest areas, hospitals, and veterinary clinics (probably reflecting the influence of Jainism in his court). The system of roads made administration of the sprawling empire easier. Roads also stimulated trade between different parts of the empire and connected inland areas with coastal ports. Rest areas with covered pavilions and wells eased the hardships of travel. Reforestation projects helped restore areas devastated by fighting, provided a habitat for animals, and provided shade and various fruits for consumption by living things. Hospitals provided for the physical health of his subjects. In these various undertakings, Ashoka appears to have acted on a sense that the ruler had a responsibility to rule for the benefit of his or her people, a sense of the reciprocal nature of the relationship between government and the governed. These ideas certainly reflected Buddhism's expectation that rulers set an example of righteousness. The Chinese notion of the Mandate of Heaven may also have influenced Ashoka's decision to rule in this way.

That such Chinese influences may have been at work are quite possible because Ashoka's India was increasingly linked to trade beyond South Asia. India occupied a kind of geographic "middle man" position between China and Southeast Asia on the one hand and Persia and the Mediterreanean West on the other. The famous "Silk Road" and other land routes joined these areas as did sea routes in the Indian Ocean. A brisk trade developed involving Indian spices, gems, perfumes, aromatic woods, ivory, and cotton. India's location also benefitted the carrying trade. Spices from the islands of modern Indonesia and silks from China were in steady demand in the West, generating profits for Asoka's enterprising merchants and merchant marine. Ashoka probably hoped that economic prosperity, improved public health, and the peaceful tenets of Buddhism would promote peace and stability in his heterogeneous empire.

The degree of Ashoka's apparent commitment to Buddhism had two important results. He organized and financed Buddhist missionaries to go beyond the geographic boundaries of South Asia. Ashoka's missionaries were sent overland to the West as well as to Tibet, Mongolia, and China; by sea, his missionaries traveled to Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia. (SR22) Imperial patronage thus formalized a process which had probably already been underway as a result of the growing trade between India and other parts of Eurasia discussed above. That Buddhism is a world faith today is at least in part the legacy of Ashoka.

Within India, however, the extent of his devotion to Buddhism resulted in increasing unhappiness, among the upper castes in particular. Decrees banning animal sacrifice offended the Brahmins, hampering their ability to practice their religion and thus legitimize their exalted position in society. Decrees outlawing sport hunting angered many among the kshatriyas for whom hunting was a favorite pastime. In addition, it may have been expecting too much to hope that a professional warrior class would actively support an official policy of ahimsa. Although Ashoka did not live to see it, a backlash set in which climaxed in the assassination of his grandson by a Hindu general in 185 B.C.E., thus ending the Mauryan dynasty. Many local rulers hurried to (re)embrace the older faith and thus avoid a similar fate. In the absence of one strong ruler, the (virtual) political unity of India also came to an end. It would be almost 2000 years before India would achieve a comparable degree of unification again.

The Evolution of Buddhism

Buddhism continued to coexist with Hinduism (and Jainism) in India for several hundred years, but the Buddhist community gradually split into several different sects, the two most important of which are called Mahayana and Hinayana (also called Theravada). The original schism dates from a council of Buddist elders which met to discuss matters of practice and belief about a century after the historic Buddha's death. At that time, the majority of Buddhists clung to the traditions as they had been transmitted orally. This sect called itself Theravada, the Way of the Elders, and seems to have accounted for most early Indian Buddhists.

In addition, the worship of Buddhist "saints," called bodhisattvas, became very popular and competed, in effect, with devotion to the historic Buddha. The tradition of bodhisattvas is rooted in a belief that, because the Buddha had achieved nirvana, he is detached from human affairs. Bodhisattvas are thought to have achieved awakening, but to have chosen to postpone nirvana in order to inspire and aid others in their individual quests for spiritual awakening. Unlike Christian saints (and unlike the Buddha himself), however, bodhisattvas are not historic personages; they are religious constructs which filled a popular need.

As scriptures and prescribed rituals developed, less emphasis was placed on individual behavior and belief. With its sects and stories, its rules and rituals, its statues and saints, Buddhism came increasingly to resemble the Hinduism from which it had originally rebelled. That devout Buddhists were to remain celibate did little to guarantee the replication of the faith from one generation to the next although the lure of a comfortable lifestyle in temple-complexes made wealthy from donations continued to draw large numbers to this evolving Indian Buddhism. The deathblow for Buddhism in India came as a result of Muslim invasions beginning in the early 700's C.E. Countless temples were destroyed, thousands of Buddhist clerics were slaughtered, thousands more fled north into the Himalayas and southeast across the Indian Ocean. Within India, the survivors gradually returned to Hinduism which had evolved as well. Animal sacrifice was abandoned, and Buddha was accepted into the Hindu pantheon as another of the avatars of Vishnu. According to Will Durant, "Brahmanism killed (Indian) Buddhism by a fraternal embrace. In modern India, barely one percent of the population identifies itself as Buddhist.

Buddhism flourished farther east in Asia, however. Broadly speaking, coming from Sri Lanka which was beyond the grip of either Hindu or Muslim rulers, Hinayana Buddhism predominated in Southeast Asia. Vietnam is something of an exception to this given the influence of Chinese civilization on that of Vietnam. Mahayana Buddhism established itself in Tibet, Mongolia, China, Korea, Japan, and Vietnam from its original sites in northern India. As Buddhism spread beyond India and eventually all but disappeared in India itself, other factors came into play. Traveling by water, Buddhists had reached Southeast Asia quickly and in large numbers. There was less time for ideas to evolve, and Buddhism was generally welcomed by the local people who were traditionally open to many cultural influences given their location bestride active commercial sealanes. Land travel over the Himalayas to points east was slower and much more difficult. The harsh conditions of such travel discouraged large numbers of people from even attempting the trip, and many who tried did not survive the attempt. Only very gradually did Buddhism make its way east: a thousand years passed between the death of the Buddha and the acceptance of Buddhism in Japan! There was, thus, time for Buddhism to evolve, to absorb elements of the local traditions through which it passed en route. As important, there were ancient, established cultures in China, Korea, and Japan of which the locals were very proud and with which they were quite satisfied. A strong sense of ethnocentrism on the part of these cultures served to delay the acceptance of Buddhism and to adapt both the Buddha and his ideas to conform better with local traditions.

Theravada or Hinayana (the Lesser Vehicle) Buddhism is generally regarded as being the more conservative version in that it has remained closest to the historic Buddha's preaching. For the Hinayanist, the Buddha acts merely an exemplar. As such, he is "the lesser vehicle;" it is up to the individual Buddhist to achieve his or her own "awakening," generally through meditation and detachment. Further, the "awakening" is believed to be possible at any moment in the life of the believer without regard to social status or gender. Buddha statues in the Hinayana tradition depict only the historic Buddha, Siddartha Gautama

Mahayana (the Greater Vehicle) Buddhism differs from Hinayana in several important respects. In particular, it is more mystical and emotional. In the Mahayana tradition, there are five cosmic Buddhas with the power to intercede in human affairs through bodhisattvas. The Buddha is the "greater vehicle" because salvation, increasingly in an embodied form rather different from the historic Buddha's concept of nirvana, is more dependent on him than on the devotee. Prayer and ritual are more central to salvation than individual meditative efforts in this version of Buddhism. The most popular of the cosmic Buddhas is thought to preside over a paradisiacal realm of eternal life and plays an almost Christ-like role as Savior. Mahayana bodhisattvas act as intermediaries, witnessing the devotions and carrying the prayers and wishes of the faithful to the Buddha in his cosmic realm. Most popular of the Mahayana bodhisattvas is the bodhisattva of infinite compassion. For Mahayanists, the historic Buddha is the eighth of nine Buddhas whose careers span the eons of existence. They believe in the coming of a ninth Buddha of the future, the Buddha Maitreya.

Despite their considerable differences of belief and practice, both versions of Buddhism have coexisted peacefully in those areas of eastern Asia where they overlap, particularly in the islands and coastal areas bordering the South China Sea. In addition, other variations of Buddhism have arisen, notably Chinese Ch'an Buddhism (called Zen in Japan) which put a new emphasis on the individual's physical, mental, and spiritual discipline as the appropriate route to the awakened state. From its more recent East Asian roots, Buddhism in the twentieth century has won adherents around the world. Its emphasis on non-violence and its optimistic hope that there is a cure for human suffering may help explain Buddhism's continuing appeal in the modern era.

Evolution of the Buddha Image in India and Southeast Asia

After the Buddha's death, towns across northern and central India in which there were large communities of his followers built hemispherical stupas to house his ashes. These became pilgrimage sites as did other places associated with the Buddha's life. The stupas themselves, of which the Great Stupa at Sanchi is probably the best-known example, were generally not adorned with surface decoration. On the gates and fences enclosing the stupas, however, there was a great deal of surface decoration in the form of stone reliefs. It seems logical that these reliefs would portray important scenes from the life of the Buddha, yet images of the Buddha himself are somewhat curiously absent. There is no record of the Buddha specifically forbidding the creation of his image, but early artists seem to have preferred symbolic representations to literal ones.

According to Joan Cummins, there are several possible explanations for what appears to be a preference for aniconic representations in the earliest Buddhist art. In traditional Buddhist thinking, nirvana is a state of blissful nothingness. Since the Buddha had achieved nirvana, it may have seemed that the best way to show him was not to show him at all! It may be that his physical absence from a scene was intended to reinforce the distinction between the liberated Buddha and other mortals who were still striving for awakening. Buddha himself had wanted to be a teacher, not at divinity, i.e, not the object of worship. It may be that early artists were being respectful of this aspect of the Buddha's preachings. It may also have seemed logical to show the Buddha in his highest state even when he was still a "work in progress.

For whatever reason(s), most of the early Buddhist art resorts to symbols to convey the Buddha's presence. In some scenes, the banyan (bodhi) tree under which he meditated is used as a symbol for the Buddha. Another frequently-used symbol is the dharmachakra, the eight-spoked wheel, a symbol for the Wheel of the Law (of Samsara) which the Buddha is said to have set in motion when he began to preach. His presence is sometimes indicated by an empty seat over which a follower holds an umbrella, a symbol of royalty in broader Indian iconography. A set of footprints, often impressed with dharmachakras or stylized lotus blossoms, is yet another of the devices to which artists resorted to represent the Buddha symbolically. The lotus itself is used as another symbol for the Buddha, although it, too, is part of the larger iconography of Indian art, traditionally symbolic of purity and the cycle of rebirth.

By the last century before the Common Era, however, iconic representations of the Buddha began to become popular. The gradual emergence of a Buddha image was probably a response to the desire for such images on the part of growing numbers of Indians who found the concepts of Buddhism difficult to comprehend on a strictly intellectual level. It may reflect the need for iconic images for missionary use in growing Buddhist communities in eastern Asia. It may reflect the growing influence of Mahayana Buddhism with its theistic overtones. It may also reflect the influence of the Greek preference for visual representation of deities, another instance of ideas following in the wake of trade. Drawing upon pre-existing literary descriptions of the Buddha as well as upon certain long-standing Indian sculptural traditions, sculptors in different regions began to produce images which have many features in common despite certain differences in regional style.

Many Indian sculptors of Buddhist art used some elements which were already common in Hindu art. In the Hindu traditions, bodies were not generally treated as having skeletal support and musculature. Rather, bodies were full and rounded. Indian viewers understood that this convention was intended to portray bodies as vessels for prana, the breath of life which fills a body like air fills a balloon. Similarly, sculptors of Buddhist art drew upon commonly used natural metaphors as a guide for the depiction of physical features. Eyes, for example, should resemble the shape of lotus petals. The use of mudras, hand gestures with widely recognized meaning, in Buddhist art drew upon similar traditions in Hindu art. (SR14) The use of halos for Hindu gods and goddesses was also an established practice which was adopted by sculptors for the Buddha. Function influenced form in Buddhist sculpture as it did in Hindu sculpture: most works were intended for frontal worship so sculptors rarely sculpted in the round.

There seems to have been a more or less simultaneous development of a more specific Buddhist iconography at Gandhara and Mathura, two centers of sculpture production in northern and central India. (SR23) Sculptors drew upon various of the "auspicious marks" on the Buddha's body to identify him. Prominent among these is the ushnisha, the protuberance on the top of the Buddha's head, thought to be symbolic of his great wisdom. Similarly, the Buddha is depicted with a small knot of flesh on his forehead, the urna, also probably symbolic of omniscience. The Buddha was said to have been born with dharmachakras or lotuses on the palms of his hands and the soles of his feet, and these provide a very distinctive identification. The Buddha is also portrayed with elongated, usually pierced, earlobes which were reminders of his royal upbringing and the heavy earrings which he would have worn as a prince. The Buddha is depicted in very stiff postures -- whether sitting or standing, a reminder of the straightness of the bodhi tree under which he originally meditated. The Buddha's piety is indicated by the serene expression on his face is an intentional reminder of his detachment from worldly concerns, a reflection of the bliss of nirvana. The Buddha's piety is also suggested by the absence of jewelry, his short hair, and his simple monk's attire. These latter elements are important ways to distinguish the Buddha image from those of bodhisattvas and from Jains. Bodhisattvas are traditionally depicted wearing large quantities of jewelry, with elaborate coiffures, and fashionable clothes; Jains are usually nude. The Buddha's down-turned (or half-open) eyes are also a distinctive element in the iconography which evolved. Alhough Hindu deities are often portrayed with serene expressions, their eyes are wide open in order for their devotees to take darshan, the "auspicious sight" which is so important in Hinduism.

Buddha figures produced at both Gandhara and Mathura incorporated these iconographic features, but they reflect certain regional differences in material and in style. The characteristic medium of the Gandhara area is grey-black schist, very hard stone which allows very detailed sculpture. Mathuran sculptors most often used a reddish sandstone which is softer and less capable of fine detail. The differences in style have touched off a twentieth century debate concerning the origins of the Buddha image. The French art historian Foucher argued that Gandhara originated the Buddha image by incorporating Buddhist iconography into Classical Graeco-Roman sculpture. Gandhara, located in present-day Afghanistan, was situated on the Silk Road which stretched from the Mediterranean basin to China. Greek influences in Gandhara date from the era of Alexander the Great, and there is considerable evidence for both a large Greek merchant population in the city and a considerable Buddhist following among the Greeks (Cummins). Foucher's arguments prompted a response from Ananda Coomaraswamy, an Indian art historian and nationalist. Coomaraswamy has argued that the Buddha image more likely originated at Mathura among native Indian sculptors using styles that had already been used for a several centuries for the production of Hindu and Indian folk deities. As noted above, the present-day art history community seems willing to accept the idea of Buddha images appearing simultaneously at Gandhara and Mathura.

Whatever their origins, it is generally acknowledged that Buddha images played an important role in spreading the ideas of Buddhism to eastern Asian populations. Images were carried east by merchants and missionaries along land and water trade routes. Pilgrims and scholars visited India and often returned to their homelands with small, "souvenir" images of the Buddha, bodhisattvas, and even of stupas. By whatever channels,these artifacts served both as objects of worship and models for the local production of images and artforms. It is interesting to note that the basic elements of India's Buddhist iconography remained more or less intact wherever Buddhist images were created. Elements of the Buddha's facial appearance changed as did those of his attendant bodhisattvas, however, often to reflect the idealized appearance of local populations. The drapery and even the cut of their robes sometimes changed. The proportions and posture of their bodies were often altered. Local decorative motifs were sometimes incorporated into Buddhist forms even as Buddhism in India had incorporated pre-existing Hindu elements. Over time and through several civilizations, however, the Buddha figure remains virtually unmistakable.

Mainland Southeast Asia's civilizations generally embraced the Hinayana version of Buddhism. Most Buddha images represent the historic Buddha, therefore, although the bodhisattva of compasssion is also popular. The role of Indian originals seems fairly evident despite local variations on the theme. Most existing Buddhist images fom these civilizations were produced in stone or cast bronze; the climate works against less durable materials. Images range in size from less than a foot tall to somewhat larger than life-size, and were used for both household altars and public temples. The facial features of the Buddhas of this region tend to reflect the mix of ethnicities who inhabit it, and body proportions vary as well. Buddha figures and bodhisattvas from this area tend to be presented in terms of simple dress in either the "string" style which seems to have originated at Mathura or in a very lightweight, apparently free-hanging, rectangular robe with an even bottom hem. Despite their presumed detachment from human affairs, it seems likely that many of these Buddhas allowed for a personal identification with the Buddha on the part of the believer. There is a tendency towards abstraction in later works of this area, however, which is especially evident in Thai imagery. The extremely rigid posture, elongated fingers, stylized robes, and flame-topped ushnisha suggest that Buddhas of this sort are indeed beyond human approachability.

The Evolution of Buddhist Imagery in East Asia*

As East Asia was generally Mahayanist, a variety of Buddhas are portrayed as are a variety of bodhisattvas to accompany them. The historic Buddha is popular as are the Amitabha Buddha and the Buddha Maitreya (the Buddha of the Future). The bodhisattva of infinite compassion is joined by bodhisattvas who are specific to East Asian adaptations of Mahayanism. East Asian Buddhist images exist primarily in stone, cast metal, carved and gilded wood. Weather has been of less concern to their existence than have been the ravages of repeated wars, especially in China. Japan, on the other hand, has a number of wooden images and structures which date from the sixth century C.E., the era when Buddhism first arrived there. East Asia is the site of some of the largest Buddha images in the world which probably reflects the wealth and power of various Buddhist patrons. Some of these images are freestanding, such as the Great Buddha at Kamakura in Japan, while others are cut directly into the "living rock" of cliff walls, as at Yungang in China. As elsewhere, images of the various Buddhas and their followers served as the focus of worship and meditation in homes, temples and parks.

While the basic Buddhist iconography remains intact in East Asia, there is considerable adaptation of the original Indian models. The civilizations of China, Korea, and Japan were already ancient by the time of Buddhism's arrival. Each was also more isolated geographically by mountains, deserts, or oceans than were the commercial civilizations of Southeast Asia. In consequence, the entrenched ethnocentrism of East Asian civilization had to be addressed if "foreign" ideas, by which is meant "non-Chinese" ideas, were to be accepted locally. To this end, Buddhist facial features became decidedly East Asian thereby making a personal identification with the Buddha more comfortable culturally and psychologically. The eyes tend to have what Sherman Lee calls "a characteristic Chinese linearity." Noses and mouths tend to be somewhat smaller and more fine-lined than most Indian Buddhas. Forms are somewhat more squared than rounded. East Asian figures are also quite stylized in comparison with those of India, and such stylization is evident considerably earlier (8th century C.E.) than in Southeast Asia (13th century C.E.). This may reflect the more transcendent nature of the Buddha in Mahayanism. Bodies tend to be thin and elongated as are necks. Postures, particularly those of standing figures, tend to be more relaxed and curving. This is not a contrapostal curve of bones and muscle, but a sinuous, bodily fluidity. Increased decoration of the figures themselves as well as of their housings seems to accompany such stylization. East Asian Buddhist figures often have two halos -- a flame-shaped body halo (mandorla) as well as the traditional halo around the head. In some cases, the body halo serves to support and reinforce the statue. There are many examples of the double halos in which they do not serve this functional role, however, and seem to reinforce the otherworldliness of the Buddha. The Buddha's simple robes evolve into a more involved, kimono-like garment more familiar to East Asian audiences. Particularly characteristic is a tendency for these robes to cascade down the body and come to an end in dramatically jagged "flame" hems.

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*This section is included here as a logical continuation of the evolution of Buddhist art. It could also be incorporated into the following unit on China.

Noteworthy also is a tendency, especially in Chinese and early Japanese figures, to incorporate local decorative motifs into Buddhist statuary or to imbue such statues with the attributes of local mythological or folk tales. It is not uncommon to find dragons, lions, and other creatures from Chinese folk imagery framing or otherwise adorning Buddha and bodhisattva images. Similarly, the so-called "Laughing Buddha" image incorporates the plump physical characteristics and warm, approachable personality of a Chinese folk figure: the old sage who laughs at the world but whose wisdom and advice are valued and rewarded (thus the plumpness) by others. Such depictions reflect a radical departure from traditional Indian depictions of the Buddha, but they endeared him to the common people who probably struggled with the finer points of Mahayana transcendentalism!

Given the Buddha's more removed and exalted status in Mahayana Buddhism, greater emphasis is placed on bodhisattvas as compassionate intermediaries and a tendency to pair a particular cosmic Buddha with a particular bodhisattva is quite common in East Asia. Specific iconographic features allow the devotee to distinguish not only between the Buddhas but also between the attendant bodhisattvas. Japan offers a clear example of such pairings and iconographies: the historic Buddha with Kannon, Amitabha Buddha with Jizo, Mahavairochana Buddha (another of the five cosmic Buddhas) with Fudo.

Attire and mudras are principal ways to distinguish the Buddhas from one another. The historic Buddha's robes are still those of a simple monk, and the mudras generally reflect his life as a preacher of Buddhism: the teaching, discussion, and turning of the wheel of the law mudras are most common. Amitabha Buddha's robes are more like those of a prince or ruler, reminding that he is the ruler of the "pure" or "golden" Western Lands. He is most often seen using the allaying fear, conferring a favor, or the lotus mudra. The latter is a cupped palm in which an actual lotus (with its attendant symbolism) may or may not appear. Mahavairochana (called Dainichi in Japan) is richly attired and is usually crowned as well, a sort of ruler of the Universe. Although he is not considered to be a creator force, he symbolizes the coming together of the spiritual and the physical, specifically the unity of the mind and the traditional five elements of matter. The implicit message of the Mahavairochana Buddha is that the trained mind has mastery and transcendence over the material elements. He is characteristically depicted with the knowledge mudra.

If the distinctions between the Buddhas are not absolutely clear, however, the distinctions between their Japanese bodhisattvas are. Each of these has a very different appearance and iconography, each of which goes beyond the original Indian models. Kannon is often depicted with delicate, almost feminine facial features, flowing elaborate robes, and, especially in later examples, multiple heads (usually eleven) arranged as a crown. In Japan, the bodhisattva Jizo is thought to be the special patron of those who have lost their (spiritual) way. He goes where he is needed and, as such, he is portrayed as a traveler, bare-headed, simply clothed, and, unmistakably, wearing sandals! He carries a staff in one hand and holds a wish-fulfilling gem in the other hand which acts as his beacon, first guiding him to those in need and then guiding them back to understanding. Fudo, the companion of Mahavairochana, is generally portrayed with a fearsome visage -- with bulging eyes and fangs. He carries a sword in one hand and a rope in the other with which to cut through confusion and lasso doubt and negativity. His fierceness and weaponry are not directed at the devotee, however, but rather at aspects of existence which might deter the devotee from achieving the desired goal of salvation. Like more traditional bodhisattvas, therefore, Fudo also embodies compassion and caring.

From its origins in ancient India, Buddhism and its arts have traveled far -- both in terms of literal geography and of figurative evolution of ideas and forms. From his own north Indian origins, the Buddha has become a cultural fixture in most East and Southeast Asian civilizations. From his own sense of himself as a teacher and examplar of a spiritually-liberating alternative to Hinduism, the Buddha has become a virtual deity throughout much of the region with multiple embodied aspects and attendants. Buddhism has evolved from an individual lifestyle to the organized religion with millions of devotees adhering to two main and several minor variations of belief and practice. The artistic depiction of the Buddha has undergone a similar evolution over place and time. From what were likely aniconic early representations, the Buddha image became figural and iconic. Original Indian artistic treatments served as the model for locally-produced art elsewhere and became subject to a wide variety of adaptations. Non-Indian patrons and artists drew upon their own cultures' traditions and their own creativity to render the Buddha and his ideas comprehensible to a far-flung and disparate audience of the faithful. In doing so, they contributed to the enrichment of their own artistic traditions as well as to that of Buddhism in general.

Late Classical Politics and Achievements

The near unification of India under the Mauryan Emperors ended with that dynasty's collapse in 185 B.C.E. India refragmented into a series of princely states who vied for regional dominance. Alliances and rivalries shifted; warfare was common. Northwestern India began to fall victim to non-Indian raiders: first to Greco-Persian successors to the subdivisions of Alexander's collapsed "world-state" and then to the Central Asia Kushans. In a second example of what was becoming a pattern, sporadic raids launched through the passes of the Hindu Kush gave way to full-fledged conquest as the Kushans gradually built an empire. In their heyday during the second century C.E., Kushan control stretched from the Caspian to the eastern Ganges River Valley, from the Aral to the Arabian Seas.

Originally bordering the Parthian Empire to the west and the Chinese (Han) Empire to the east, the Kushans were well-situated to profit from the commercial exchanges which occurred along the trade routes connecting eastern and western Eurasia. Their control of northwestern India and much of the Indo-Gangetic Plain maintained active Indian participation in the ancient world's bustling economic relations despite its continuing political disunity. As the Roman Empire established itself in the West, the Pax Romana and the wealth of Roman citizens greatly increased the volume of trade. Many Indian products were in great demand: diamonds and other precious stones; cloth, especially cotton cloth; aromatic herbs and spices; "exotic" animals which were exported live for the amusement of the Roman upper classes and in the form of skins for their adornment. In return, India received primarily gold, slaves, and a foodstuffs. It was an arrangement which seemed to suit all concerned.

Civilization under the Kushans was very cosmopolitan. Greeks, Romans, Persians, Central Asians, Indians, and Chinese mixed freely in Kushan cities -- exchanging goods, ideas, and blending bloodlines. One of their outstanding rulers, Kanishka, even called himself Caesar. Hellenistic influences on Indian sculpture were noted above. Buddhism, already evolving into somewhat different understandings of the Buddha and what he preached, continued to spread east to China where it underwent a Sinicization process and gained masses of adherents in the declining years of the Han (early third century C.E.).

Both before and during the Kushans' rule, Indic religious philosophy also influenced Western thought. The essential unity between the world of the senses which can be experienced and known and the unseen world which can only be imagined underlies much of Greek philosophic thought as it pervades virtually all of Indian religious philosophy. In fact, it is fair to say that little distinction was made between religion, philosophy, and science in either society: all were ways to make sense of the Universe and human existence. According to M. S. N. Menon, Pythagoras, for example, embraced the notion of the soul's transmigration from one incarnation to another, and many of his followers abandoned the consumption of meat. Menon notes that Plato came to think of the soul as being derived from a "World Soul" which enters a material body until it is reabsorbed. The social divisions of Plato's Republic also remind of the castes of Hindu India, in the roles they perform and the psychological/spiritual predispositions which underlie those roles. The Greeks' notion of the world being composed of varying combinations of four elements echoes the Upanishads' five-element "atomic theory" (ether is the fifth in addition to the usual earth, wind, fire, and water).

By the third century, C.E., changing political circumstances and the rise of a new religion in the Roman world combined to bring this particular chapter of India's relations with the rest of the world to an end. Han China's unity dissolved into the so-called "Period of Disunity." China split into northern and southern halves, and multiple dynasties ruled in each half. In this atmosphere of political instability, China's overall economy was disrupted. Much of its non-farming physical energy was directed towards the production of Buddhist temples and statuary in the hope that whatever life to come would be better than the present reality.

Conditions were changing in the West as well. While the Roman Empire outlasted its Han counterpart, it was weakened by internal struggles for control of the throne which diverted resources from the consumption of imported luxuries. The Empire was also coming under increasing pressure from Germanic tribes all along its long northern frontier. Germanic invasions during the fourth and fifth centuries shattered the Empire, and Europe has never regained the degree of political, cultural, and economic unity which characterized large parts of it under Roman rule. Deteriorating conditions during later Empire led to questioning of Rome's traditional gods and a search for something more spiritually meaningful on the part of large numbers of Romans. Many found such meaning in the evolving doctrines of Christianity. With its personal

God and dualistic approach to the relationship of heaven and earth, Christianity wanted nothing to do with the polytheistic paganism of the East. At both ends of the Eurasian trade routes, therefore, conditions developed which did not encourage continued commercial or cultural exchanges on anything like the scale which had existed earlier. More or less inevitably, the Kushan Empire declined as its trade profits disappeared.

Within the subcontinent itself, however, the decline of the Kushans led to another round of jockeying for advantage among a number of princely states. By about 320 C.E., the state of Magadha, the Mauryans' original home territory on the east-central Indo-Gangetic Plain, emerged as the leading Indian state with much of the rest of the subcontinent swearing allegiance to its rulers, the Guptas. The Gupta Empire was neither as larger nor as firmly controlled as the Mauryan Empire had been, but the Guptas presided over an age of relative peace and prosperity. The size of India's population and the diversity of its regions resulted in a fairly brisk internal trade which mitigated the effects of lost exports.* Gupta civilization was accomplished in its own right by any standard of the ancient world. Given the (temporary) decline of Chinese civilization and the collapse of Rome during this period, however, India's Gupta civilization stands out even more dramatically; it is generally regarded as the most advanced in the world of its age.

The Guptas used their wealth to patronize the arts and sciences resulting in what is often called the "Golden Age" of Classical Indian culture. Court-sponsored scholars particularly excelled in math and medicine. Mathematicians pioneered the decimal system and devised a series of symbols to stand for the appropriate numerical values, including zero. With little modification, these symbols remain the global standard. They are known as "Arabic" numerals since the West first learned of them from Muslim traders. Such traders, however, likely learned them originally from Indian business partners. Gupta mathematicians also developed the concept of using positive and negative values for their numerical symbols. The beginnings of algebra can be seen in systems for deriving and using squares and cubes. Again, Muslim mathematicians built upon this early work, and Western scholars learned of it from them. For this reason, it is still called "algebra" rather than some Sanskrit term. Similarly, despite its Greek name, Gupta mathematicians determined the value of *pi* as 3.1416. Lastly, perhaps not surprisingly, and in keeping with the essential unity of Classical Indian thought, it was Indian scholars who conceived of infinity as a mathematical principle.

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*Some foreign trade continued, primarily along maritime routes to Southeast Asia and the ports of western Asia and eastern Africa. Neither did all cultural contact cease. Numerous East Asians journeyed to India by sea and overland in order to study at Buddhist centers.

Medicine was another field in which Gupta scholars excelled. Perhaps because they did not hold the physical body in esteem as being the gift or image of God* or of having much intrinsic value, Indian doctors of this period were able to perform studies of anatomy and to perform several types of surgery which, though fairly routine today, were quite remarkable for the fifth century C.E. Court doctors appear to have had a workable sense of osteology. They determined the structure of the spinal column and surmised its functions of support for and protection of the spinal cord. Gupta doctors understood that bones, like skin, healed. They used this knowledge to set broken bones by immobilizing them in the proper position for a period of time. Court physicians knew surgical procedures to correct cleft palates and club feet; they could also perform Caesarian section births.

It is not clear how widespread such practices were, however. In a society which believes that what befalls one in this life is the karmic result of actions in a previous life, medical tampering with karmic consequences expressed in physical ailments or conditions would seem inappropriate. Human responses to certain situations may transcend religious and cultural norms, however. On the one hand, parents in a sufficiently privileged and powerful position might be willing to do anything to secure the birth of a child or to correct features which impaired the child's functioning or appearance. On the other, individual doctors might have felt divinely inspired (and/or powerful) if their knowledge could be used to undo karma. That doctors could perform certain procedures does not necessarily mean that they did so -- whether routinely or under extraordinary circumstances.

That such matters might be taken seriously is reinforced by the fact that the Guptas were a Hindu dynasty. They did not persecute Buddhists, but they encouraged the syncretistic trend already in evidence in Indian Buddhism. Gupta patronage of Indian literature was another method to promote and popularize Hindu concepts of dharma as has been noted above. Kalidasa was one playwright so honored with sponsorship from the Gupta Imperial court. His enduring popularity bears witness to his skill and their shrewd promotion of the message in the media.

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*Indian statuary often tries to convey divinity in human terms, but this is not at all the same as believing that humans are made in image of god.

The Gupta Empire came to an end under continuing attacks from various tribes of Huns who used the Hindu Kush passes yet again to gain access to the wealthy cities of northern India. Inflicting much the same sort of destruction in India as they did in Europe, the Huns dealt a blow to the political and economic bases for Gupta overlordship. Trade recovered gradually after the Huns receded back into Central Asia from whence they came, but the Guptas were discredited by their inability to defend successfully. The dynasty ended officially in 540 C.E., but its greatness had already passed.

A new series of princely states emerged which began a new round of alliances, wars, betrayals, and realignments. This situation contined for some 150 years by which time a new force was making itself felt in western Asia which was destined to have a great effect on India. Unified under the banner of Islam, Arab armies exploded out of Arabia in 632, the year of Muhammed's death. Everywhere victorious, Muslim armies spread across the Levant, North Africa and across the Strait of Gibraltar into Europe. By marshaling the resources of the Frankish state, Charles Martel stopped the Muslim advance at Tours in 732. The Pyrenees became the boundary between the world of Christian Europe and Islam. Such was not the case farther east, however. Having defeated the Persian Empire, Muslim forces controlled the key Hindu Kush passes by 664. Pushing forward, they found no Indian state comparably organized to resist as the Franks had. The conquest of northwestern india in 712 marked the beginning of almost a thousand years of Islamic dominance in India.

Teacher Notes

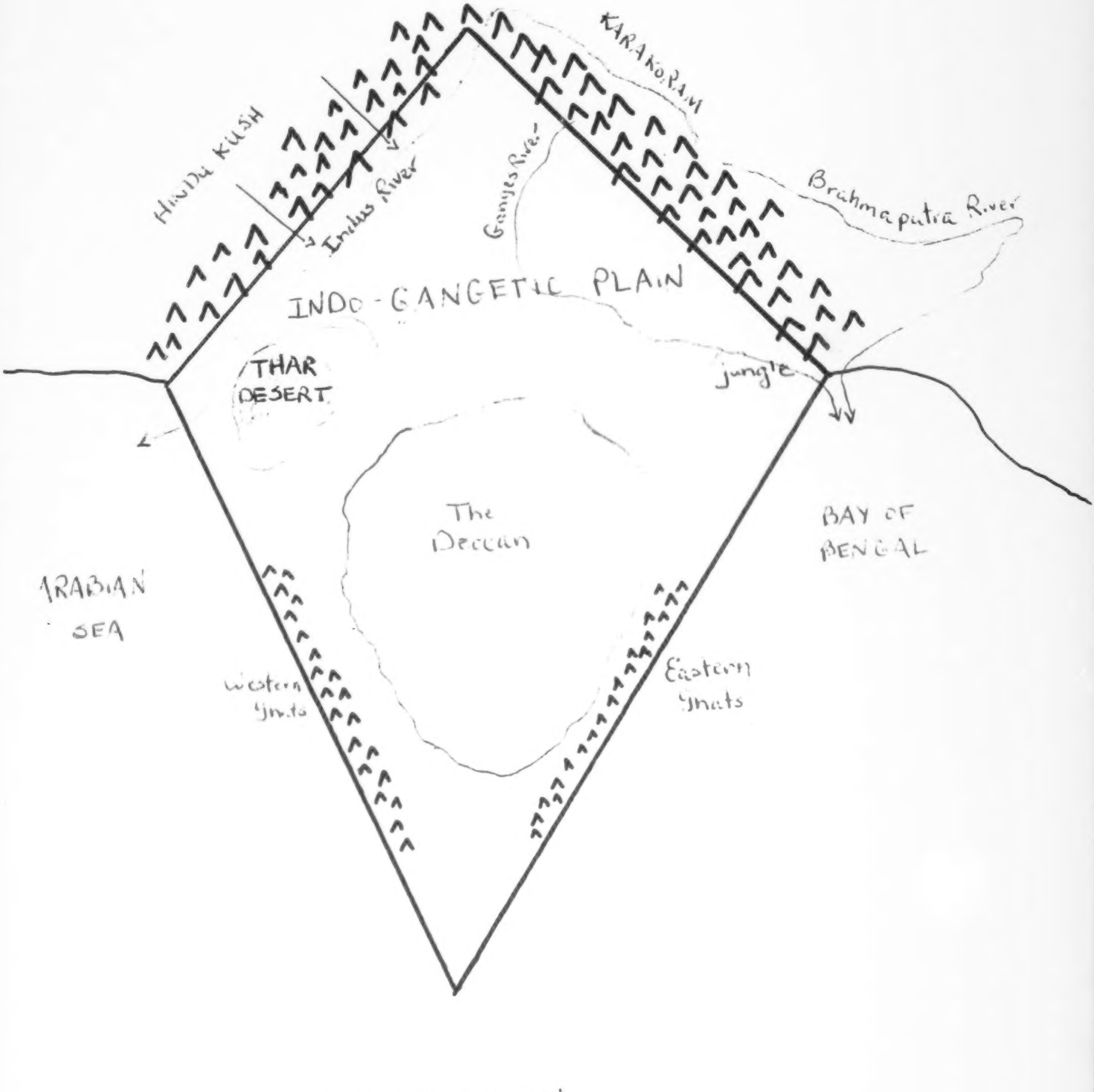
1. A Conceptual Approach to India's Geography
2. Explanations to Accompany the Harappan Seals
3. Thoughts for Discussion of the Code of Manu
4. Rig-Veda: Notes on The Sacrifice of Primal Man and The Hymn to Agni
5. Notes to Accompany Excerpts from the Upanishads
6. Explanations to Accompany the Karma Drawings
7. Notes to Accompany Bhakti Poetry
8. Notes on the Hindu Temple
9. Synopsis of Kaildasa's Shakuntala
10. Savitri Discussion Ideas
11. Notes to Accompany the Bhagavad-Gita
12. Notes to Accompany "Basic Rules for Jain Mendicants" and "Key Concepts in Jain Asceticism"
13. Notes on Asoka's Rock Edicts

Possible Discussion Questions to Accompany Unit on Classical India

A Partial Listing of Sources for Audio-visuals, Maps, and Slides

Works Consulted

A Conceptual Approach to India's Geography


KARAKORAM
HINDU KUSH
Indus River
Ganges River
Brahmaputra River
INDO-GANGETIC PLAIN
THAR DESERT
jungle
The Deccan
BAY OF BENGAL
ARABIAN SEA
Western Ghats
Eastern Ghats
INDIAN OCEAN

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Explanations to Accompany the Harappan Seals

These pages are drawn from the works of Walter Fairservis Jr. The first two from The Roots of Ancient India, the third and fourth from an article he wrote for Scientific American some years ago. The seals on the first two pages are shown in their approximate actual size; pages three and four show enlargements.

The seals show great detail despite their small size and suggest that those responsible for their creation were careful observers of nature. The regular appearance of animals, especially bulls, in these seals is hard to miss. Animals seem to have held some sort of totemic and/or religious significance for the Indus River Civilization. Students should be able to identify many of the animals shown: water buffalo (seals 2 and 3), rhinoceros (seal 5), elephant (seal 6), tiger (seals 7 and 24), alligator (seal 8), deer (seal 33b), and bulls (seals 1 and 4; enlarged seal 1). Many are water animals with which a river-oriented civilization in these latitudes would logically be familiar. Others, such as seals 9,10,11,21, and 28, may be harder to identify. But take heart! Archaeologists are not very certain about what they show either! There is consensus that this early use of animals in pre-Aryan Indian society was conflated with the Aryans' own reverence for cattle and absorbed into Hinduism. As it evolved during the final millenium before the Common Era, Hinduism honors both animal deities (such as Hanuman, the monkey god) and composite deities (such as Ganesha) with human and animal attributes.

Some of the seals show scenes rather than individual animals. Like the animal seals, some scenes are easily recognizable. Seal 29, for example, looks like a hunting party; seal 30 bears a resemblance to the scenes of bull-vaulting which decorated Cretan palace walls; seal 19 shows a person wrestling two animals -- perhaps an entertainment or some sort of rite. Other scenes are harder to comprehend, however. In seal 16, a central human figure is depicted on a raised platform in a meditative yogic posture. This figure is flanked by two other humans and two upright cobras --all of whom seem to be doing homage to the central seated figure. While the specific connections between the religious practices of Indus River civilization and subsequent Indian religious traditions are not clear, elements of their practices (and perhaps of their beliefs as well) have endured. All later traditions have used a platform or low pedestal to elevate the objects of religious devotion. The cross-legged meditative posture is similarly used and depicted in Hinduism, Jainism, and Buddhism. Cobras still occupy a place of importance in popular religion throughout most of India. They are regarded as a symbol of auspiciousness in Hinduism, and they figure in the stories and art of Jainism and Buddhism as well. The cobras here may also symbolize the power of life and death as does the cobra in the double crown of an Egyptian pharoah. The kneeling posture of the flanking humans reminds of modern Hindus before their domestic shrines (although a ritual humbling or submission of the supplicant before the deity is not limited to Indian religion!).

Seals 17 and 18 also appear to be related to later Hinduism. Both seals show a raised seated human figure wearing a water buffalo headdress. Seal 17 (enlarged seal 2) is particularly well-known and has been dubbed "Lord of the Beasts". The central figure is flanked by smaller-scale animals including a rhinoceros, a water buffalo, an elephant, a tiger, and at least one goat. What looks like a small human stick figure also appears to one side. Archaeologists speculate that this seal may be a proto-Shiva, the traditional Hindu "lord of the animals". Based on his work with the Harappan script, Fairservis has suggested the following translation of this seal's incription: "The Black One, the Black Buffalo, the High One, the Lord of Chiefs". That traditional Hinduism refers to Shiva as "the Dark Lord" and that his animal "vehicle" is a horned bull may be merely coincidental, but there does seem to be a pattern of similarities between the religious practices of Harappan civilization and those of later India.

The clay figurines of women found in Harappan cities also suggest ties to the later religious traditions of India. A largely agricultural society would logically place great emphasis on fertility, and many ancient societies associated the fertility of the earth with the fertility of women. The abundant breasts, generally narrow waists, and full, flaring hips of the Harappan figurines accentuate those parts of the body most immediately identified with fertility and child-bearing. They are also shown with quantities of jewelry thereby combining symbols of prosperity with those of fertility; the two qualities are natural complements. Both the yakshis of popular religion in India and the female deities of Hinduism echo these elements of the Harappan figurines, suggesting some degree of cultural continuity with India's more distant past. If the Harappan "Lord of the Beasts" does represent proto-Shiva, who is recognized as one of the oldest pre-Aryan deities and whom Hinduism often visually represents as a lingam, it suggests that Indus River civilization honored both the male and the female principles, just as Hinduism does.

Students are also likely to notice the symbols shown in seals 12 and 14. Both are ancient symbols of the sun and/or the cosmos, and both have been found in other early civilizations. Both reappear in the religious symbolism of later Indian religious traditions. According to The American Heritage College Dictionary, the word "swastika" comes from the Sanskrit term svastikah, a symbol of good luck, which derives from svasti meaning "well-being". It may be that the people of Harappa equated individual well being with the well-being of the cosmos, a notion which appears in Hinduism and Jainism to some extent. It is worth noting that the Jains incorporate the (clock-wise) swastika into their worship as part of a larger symbolic representation of Jain thinking. In their imagery, the swastika is understood as symbolically uniting the four categories of beings (gods, humans, animals, and hell-beings). An alternate explanation suggests that the four arms represent the four divisions of Jain society (male mendicants, female mendicants, the male laity, the female laity). In either interpretation, the four branches are joined together in the common quest for permanent liberation from karma and rebirth.

Thoughts for Discussion of the Code of Manu

It is worth remembering that the "Code of Manu" was written by and for male Brahmins. The Code puts them at the top of the socio-spiritual-sexual organization of India, a position divinely ordained for them by the grace of Brahman. How convenient! The Code helps show how religious justifications reinforced the stratified socio-sexual organization of Indian society in its reference to the earlier Vedas, but, of course, the Brahmins wrote them, too.

The Code can be a springboard for considerations about the sources and distribution of power within a society. What are the sources of social power? Are they the same for all societies? Do they change over time, and, if so, how? How does a group put itself on top? How does it stay there? At whose expense? What can those lower down do to improve their situation, if anything? How can power be redistributed? What are some examples of societies which have undergone or are undergoing such a redistribution? "Affirmative action" programs in contemporary American or Indian society (see St. Petersburg Times article in SR7) might be relevant here as well.

Student reactions to "On the Position of Women" may also raise questions about the "proper" place of women. What are the benefits to each gender of such an arrangement? What are the disadvantages? Does the position of women as described in the Code sound like their place in any modern society? Does a woman deserve independence? Would "need" work as a synonym for "deserve" in this instance? If so, does it change the impact of the statement?

It might also be interesting to reverse the gender roles as they are described in the Code to see how students react. Alternatively, students might write their own Code -- as individuals or in groups.

Rig-Veda X,xc
"The Sacrifice of Primal Man"

This excerpt from the Rig-Veda provides an account of the Vedic Creation. From the original sacrificing of the loka-purusa (Primal Man) came the heavens and earth, humankind, the seasons, animals and bird, the elements, the sun and the moon, the Vedas and the gods themselves.

1. This text can be used to demonstrate the importance of sacrifice in early Vedic religion. When the Brahmins offered ritual sacrifice by fire to their gods, they were replicating the gods' own behavior from the beginning of the world-age. By doing so, they hoped to maintain the original cosmic order of the Universe into their own future.
2. The imagery of the first stanza emphasizes the intelligence, vision, and power of Primal Man and suggests a source for the visual depiction of the later Hindu gods as having multiple heads, eyes, and limbs.
3. The notion of the cyclical nature of time and events is suggested: the second stanza speaks of Primal Man as being "what was and what is yet to be"; the fifth stanza suggests the application of this to mortal man (viraj).
4. The ritual procedure for sacrifice is spelled out in stanzas six, seven, and fifteen. Sacrifice by fire remained the integral ritual of Vedic religion until the last few centuries before the Common Era when the meaning of "sacrifice" was reinterpreted by the Upanishadic thinkers and others.
5. Stanzas eleven and twelve legitimize the organization of Aryan (and later Indian) society into the four castes. While this account appears to place the Brahmins in the superior social position from the moment of Creation onwards, it must be remembered that the Vedas were not written down until after the Aryan conquest of northern India and their adoption of a sedentary lifestyle. In pre-conquest nomadic Aryan society, the warriors were held in highest esteem with the priests in a secondary position. The appearance of references such as these in the sacred writings justified the reversal of social positions which evolved between these two groups in period from about 1500 B.C.E. to about 1200 B.C.E. Caste was also justified by the degree of ritual purity, and the imagery of these stanzas positions the Brahmins nearer to the heavens, more removed from the baseness of contact with the earth.
6. An issue which caused considerable speculation in later centuries

is also evident in this excerpt. If the Vedic gods (Indra and fire -- deified as Agni) were created from the sacrifice of Primal Man, who are the gods performing this original sacrifice? Who or what created them? To whom or what were they making the sacrifice? Who or what created the Primal Man? It was in the process of trying to resolve these issues that the notion of Brahman, the uncreated and unborn essence behind and throughout the Universe, evolved and became central to "Hinduism".

The excerpt lends itself well to comparison with Biblical accounts of Creation found in Genesis. It could also be compared to various African or East Asian explanations of the origin of the cosmos and humankind. Questions to consider in each case might include the following:

a. What is the creating force? What obligations are expected of that which is created?

b. What overlaps exist between the account of creation and the society, the political system, and/or the culture in which the account originated?

c. Does the creation account have applications and/or significance in modern circumstances?

d. What position does humankind occupy relative to the creating force? to the rest of creation?

Rig-Veda, XXXI,i
"Hymn to Agni"

The following is not original work, but the copy I received did not provide a scholarly attribution or citation.

"The discovery of fire consitutes a significant landmark in the history of human civilization, and it is not unnatural that fire should have been held in great awe from early times. The Aryans, however, developed the worship of Agni or Fire to an extraordinary degree.

The god Agni is the personification and deification especially of the sacrificial fire. He is the priest of the gods and the god of the priests. In the Rig-Veda, he is second only to Indra in prominence. He has three forms: terrestrial as fire, atmospheric as lightning, and celestial as the sun. Thus, his function as the sacrificial fire of the priests serves as a kind of liaison between man and the heavenly gods -- specifically he carries the oblations which the brahmin priests pour into the fire to the gods. The correct propitiation of Agni in the Vedic ritual was thus of considerable importance to Aryan man."

In the first three stanzas of the hymn itself, it is interesting to note that Agni plays different grammatical roles -- first as object, then as subject, then as object of a preposition. The variety of liguistic usage may be coincidental, but it may also symbolize the versatility of Agni's position in Vedic thinking and worship.

The "Hymn to Agni" may also be a means by which students can begin to understand the Upanishadic reinterpretation of the Vedas. In the Vedas, Agni is addressed as the literal "illuminator of darkness". When the oblation was poured, the altar flames would normally flare up.* It is not a far stretch, however, to think of "holy thought" as a symbolic offering, a symbolic dispeller of darkness, a symbolic messenger to the gods. Such reinterpretations added a more spiritual dimension to Hindu (as distinct from Vedic) worship and made direct worship possible for non-Brahmins.

Stanza three's definition of "wealth and welfare" as being "replete with heroic sons" also provides an interesting insight on the preference for sons in ancient and modern (especially rural) India. This might be a springboard to a discussion of (1) women's place in traditional Hindu and modern Indian society and (2) population statistics which suggest an extraordinarily large percentage of males to females in India . This latter is almost certainly the result of lingering prejudices against girl infants and wives and may take the extreme forms of female infanticide and the murder of wives for their dowries. While such practices are definitely illegal under Indian law, the statistics are hard to explain otherwise. In most societies, females outnumber males -- which might also be a point to explore with students!

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*Clarified butter, ghee, was often used as the oblation, as it still is, and has a symbolism of its own. Clarified butter is the product of transformation through effort (from milk to butter) and subsequent purification (as the whey settles out). As such, it is a recognizable metaphor for the process of spiritual purification which was the goal of Vedic worship (through sacrifice) and remains the goal of Hinduism as a religion and a way of life (through dharma and asceticism).

Notes to Accompany "Excerpts from the Upanishads"

These two excerpts from the Upanishads give some sense of how difficult it was to try to make sense of and explain the nature of Brahman in the Universe, of atman within the individual. Instead, the authors of the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad rely upon reciting a literal list of things and phenomena in which Brahman is found but of which he is not a part. The implication is that Brahman is everywhere, in everything and every sort of being. The authors continue with a somewhat shorter list of human attributes and abilities in which Brahman-as-atman may be found, but -- again -- of which he is not a part. The sense is that Brahman-as-atman permeates the existence of human beings, but transcends mere humanity. Throughout the excerpt, the ideas that Brahman (or Brahman-as atman) is within the self, is ultimately in control, and is immortal/eternal are repeated again and again.

The last paragraph of this excerpt is quite important. Whether seen heard, thought, or understood, Brahman is. The notion that "No other seer than He is there, etc....." helps explain how the Hindus could accept that an entire pantheon of gods might actually represent aspects of this One, Brahman. The final sentence is also important: "What is other than He suffers." The suffering referred to is the suffering of samsara. The distinctness of Brahman from the material universe which is subject to the cycle of creation, destruction, and recreation parallels the distinctness of atman from its host's material body which is subject to the same cycle. In order to get free of the cycle, the individual must fully identify with Brahman-as-atman which is the goal of the devout Hindu.

The authors of the Chandogya Upanishad use a somewhat different style to make their point. They gently ridicule Svetaketu's sense that he knows all there is to know because he has studied the Vedas. Very quickly, he is made to realize (as are we) that there is more to be understood. Although they were written at different times and by different "forest dwellers", there is a fairly continuous line of thought between the two which can be seen from Brihadaranyaka (23) to Chandogya (VI,i): making sense of that which is not rationally seen, heard, thought, or known . In both vignettes, Svetaketu's father helps him realize that what cannot be seen or found still does exist and have effect. His father's firm but gentle affirmations of "That you are, Svetaketu" reinforce the (invisible, spiritual) unity between the individual and the universal.

Explanations to Accompany the Karma Drawings
from Jack Stratton Hawley

In this series of drawings which suggest the workings of karma, the central figure is Yama, Lord of the Underworld, Guardian of the Next Life. He is shown enthroned in the dharma court. The mace symbolizes his authority; the lotus is a symbol of purity and rebirth. The clerk to Yama's right sits by a scale in which each individual's good and bad deeds are weighed. The figure to Yama's left supervises the Underworld where various torments await the transgressor in question until his or her eventual rebirth. The scenes which surround him graphically illustrate the karmic "fruits" of actions which are contrary to dharma.

Students might be asked to study the images closely and try to infer what is being shown in each case, i.e., what the cause-effect relationship of the paired scenes is. This will be easier in some cases than in others, but the following will enable the teacher to provide clues for the less obvious scenes. Moving clockwise from the upper left-hand corner:

a. This man is a food/spice merchant who has rigged his scales so that his customers pay for more than they actually get. The stomach is the locus of his karmic torment.

b. This man is a teamster who has loaded much more on his cart than the oxen can properly pull. He is also applying the whip under these circumstances. Note the ox-like head features of the demon in the scene below who reverses roles with the earthly transgressor.

c. The woman on the right is a midwife who is administering medications which will cause the other woman to abort. Note that it is the midwife who is being tormented in the scene below, not the woman who was pregnant, and that the womb area is the target of pain.

d. This man is an official of some sort who is accepting a bribe, perhaps to fund his consumption of liquor and cigarettes. The punishment for his dishonesty is to be consumed by the serpent-like creatures who swim in the river between life and death.

(Apologies for the incomplete images at the bottom of the paper. The copy from which this came was similarly lacking, and I did not have access to the original. It is still possible, however, to get an idea of the punishments in store.)

e. This man is stealing (from a curiously non-Indian looking home!). He is being dragged upside down by the white bull which seems to symbolize righteousness, i.e., living according to dharma. The same head on which the thief placed his ill-gotten gains is now the source of his agony.

f. This scene depicts marital infidelity. The guilty couple is engulfed in flames (of illicit passion?!) as they are also tormented by the attendants of the Underworld.

g. This man is needlessly inflicting injury on his animal victim. While animal (especially goat) sacrifice is still sanctioned on certain holidays, care should be taken to minimize the animal's suffering. This man's insensitivity appears to result in his own suffering under the blade of a saw.

h. This man's self-indulgence and attachment to material things (such as the cooling blades of his spinning fan) have resulted in his subjection to the spinning saw (and drops of salted water, sweat perhaps, falling on his wounds?).

The narrow horizontal image directly below that of Yama appears to show the smooth passage of a righteous person across the river to rebirth, again aided by the white bull.

These are relatively recently-produced images, but they present a considerably simplified sense of the cause-effect workings of dharma and karma. Not all karmic consequences may not be quite so obvious or quite so directly related to previous transgressions of dharma. Like so much in Hinduism, no single understanding or application of the interaction of these two principles is entirely adequate by itself.

Notes to Accompany Bhakti Poetry

Mahadevi's Shiva Bhakti

Despite being named for the Great Goddess, the poet-saint Mahadevi was a devotee of Shiva. As the Constance Burns article on Shiva from Smithsonian makes clear, he was as known for his sensuality as for his asceticism. Mahadevi's poem is quite straightforward in its profession of love for him. Because Shiva is also a lord of the dead and of cremation, he is often depicted as daubed in the ashes of the dear, thus the reference to him as "white as jasmine". Mahadevi expresses the poignancy of the absence of her beloved Lord and seems to want to savor it as much as she savors His presence.

Mirabai's Krishna Bhakti

Mirabai's references to her father-in law, the Rana, remind of his anger at her alleged refusal to act as a proper Rajput wife to the Rana's son. I do not believe that the reference to the "poison cup" is literal; rather, it describes his mood towards her which she either ignores or indulges. Mirabai's independence and advocacy of women's education in an age which still expected its women to be merely obedient may also have angered him.

Krishna is usually depicted with purple skin, the "color of dusk" according to this poem. Mirabai is so full of her love for Krishna that she,too, is flushed -- with emotion and desire. Upper caste women did not usually perform dances as entertainments for men although a wife might perform privately for her husband. Mirabai's dances for Krishna's pleasure cast her in the role of Radha, his beloved consort. As Mirabai's dances were performed "in the presence of saints," i.e., other devotees of Krishna, however, they seemed scandalous according to the conservative (even for Hinduism) standards of the Rajputs.

In calling Krishna the "clever Mountain Lifter" in the last stanza, Mirabai refers to one of his many miraculous deeds. In a dispute with Krishna over the spiritual allegiance of the people of Vrindavan (also Brindavan) in north central India, Indra caused massive rains to fall which threatened their land, livelihood, and lives. Krishna used his great strength and ingenuity to lift a local mountain and use it as an umbrella. By doing so, he demonstrated that his power was greater than that of Indra (the chief of the Vedic gods!) as was his care and concern for the well-being of his people. Recall that Krishna is an avatar of Vishnu, the preserver. It was natural for Vishnu (as Krishna) to intervene when

Indra's show of anger threatened the preservation of life and order.

Ramprasad's Devi Bhakti

Named for Rama, an avatar of Vishnu, Ramprasad was nonetheless a devotee of the Goddess. That the Goddess, like most of the principal deities of Hinduism, takes many forms was not a new idea. She was recognized as Tara, her gentlest form; as Durga, a fierce demon-fighter; as the ferocious Kali who feasts on the blood of her enemies; as the skeletal Chamunda, the Horrific Destroyer of Evil. Ramprasad expresses his devotion to Devi further, however, by equating her with Vishnu (as Krishna) and Shiva. As all the Hindu gods came to be thought of as aspects of Brahman, this is not illogical, but it was somewhat unusual in bhakti poetry. Ramprasad is suggesting that these two main male deities are merely other forms of Devi herself, not unlike her various female forms. The "long, loose hair" and the "flute in your hand" are images associated with Krishna. The Jumna is a tributary of the Ganges which flows in the vicinity of Vrindavan, a region traditionally devoted to Krishna, as noted in Mirabai's poem. That Kali is "now...fond of" it suggests almost literally that she is moving in on his territory. The reference to hair "tied in a knot" reminds of Shiva in his ascetic mode. In addition, he is sometimes depicted as half-male and half-female. Although his consort is Parvati, the line in this poem to a female as "half your body" probably refers to this dual-gender aspect of Shiva.

The poem's three stanzas also recount a progression of realization. In the first stanza, Ramprasad asks "Who comprehends this mystery?" By the end of the second stanza, he has "fathomed the mystery after deep reflection". In the third stanza, he is ready for the Goddess to take him as an offering. It is interesting that he moves between the Goddess as Tara, who is beneficent, and the Goddess as Kali, who is quite fearsome in this last stanza. He seems torn between understanding her great power yet fearing it at the same time.

Notes on "The Hindu Temple"

Temples form a large part of Classical India's architectural heritage. Temples were (and are) intended to be structures which are inviting to the gods and conducive to human transcendence. They are often located at places which have associations with one or more of the Hindu deities, and they are holy in their own right wherever they may be situated. As a sign of pious respect, Hindu (and Buddhist) devotees generally circumambulate a temple in clockwise fashion before entering. They stop in front of exterior shrines and/or statues to take darshan and offer prayers. They will generally circumambulate the sanctuary within the temple before beginning their puja before the altar. (see Fig. 1)

Early in the Common Era, as "Hinduism" took clearer shape philosophically, certain traditions of temple construction hardened into rigid principles compiled in volumes called the shilpashastras. These volumes detailed everything from who could build temples to how they should be oriented, from the size of the sanctuary to the materials which should be used. The shilpashastras are not engineering manuals all the same; they are aesthetic guidelines to ensure that temples will fulfill their spiritual purposes. The earliest temples were often built from wooden beams, but these tended not to last too well in the humidity which characterizes much of India's climate. Stone became the preferred building material for temples although brick was not uncommon, especially in southern India which is drier. Some Hindu (and Buddhist) temples were actually cut into (or out of) "living rock" walls given them a literal permanence that borders on the eternal!

Although there are many regional variations (as is true of virtually all aspects of Hinduism!), it is accurate to generalize in terms of northern Indian temples and southern Indian temples. Both designs contain certain basic architectural themes which are worth noting. Temples are usually aligned with the cardinal directions. The arrows on the diagrams which follow, for example, all indicate north. In this way, temples are in sync with the Universe which they represent in microcosm. Southern sanctuaries tend to stand by themselves within vast complexes which are often referred to as temple-villages (see Fig. 6); northern sanctuaries are more often enclosed within a single larger structure (see Figs. 3 and 5) Whatever the size of the temple or temple complex, however, the actual sanctuary (garbha griha, or womb chamber) is usually quite small and dark.

The small size of the sanctuaries limits the number of people who can be in attendance at any one moment (although crowding can be massive on holidays). In this way, the sanctuaries provide for a more private, more intimate exchange between worshipper and deity. Most sanctuaries are also square to allow for the orderly release of energy from the statue or image housed within it. (see Fig. 2)

As is true of most religious architecture, Hindu temples contain a tremendous amount of deliberate symbolism. In both northern- and southern-style temples, the worshipper moves in toward the sanctuary leaving the phenomenal world farther and farther behind. This is accomplished in northern temples by going up stairs and passing through antechambers before reaching the sanctuary. In the southern temple complexes, worshippers pass through enormous gateways called gopurams as they penetrate multiple sets of concentric walls surrounding the sanctuary and its image. (see Fig. 6) In either case, the worshipper's journey to reach the sanctuary parallels the spiritual journey of atman to reach Brahman. Given Hinduism's emphasis on reincarnation, the act of entering and then exiting a dark, damp "womb chamber" has an obvious sort of symbolic value. Done day after day throughout a lifetime, this act of worship replicates the countless rebirths needed to achieve moksha. Both styles of temple architecture use large quantities of exterior statuary -- for darshan, as meditative foci, and as a pictorial representation of the hierarchical nature of the Hindu Universe. Tiered ranks of statuary lead the eye (and the mind) of the viewer upward from the world of humans, generally depicted near the base, to the realm of the gods ascending the temple's or the gopuram's walls, to the beyond as represented by the sky and the heavens. The soaring height of northern towers and of southern gopurams reinforces this vertical visual effect. (see Figs. 5, 6, and 7)

Northern temples include an additional dimension of symbolic cosmic symmetry. (See Fig. 4) Exactly surmounting the garbha griha is any temple's tallest tower, called a shikhara. The whole temple comes to represent Mt. Meru, the very center of the Universe in the Indian religio-philosophic tradition. When worshipping at the altar here, therefore, the devotee is symbolically in alignment with the horizontal and vertical axes of the cosmos, a spiritually beneficial location.

The above is a scant beginning, but it offers some ideas for developing the symbolism of Hindu temple architecture. George Michell's

The Hindu Temple is a short, readable volume in which a more detaiiled analysis can be found. Please note that the pictures and plan shown in Figure 5 are not of the same temple. The plan is of the Lakshmana Temple; the pictures are of the Vishvanatha Temple. That these two temples at Khajuraho are so similar in their basic architecture, however, helps establish the existence of a northern Indian style. Similarly, the plan in Figure 6 shows the Vishnu temple at Shrirangam while the picture shows the Pampati temple at Vijayanagara. Again, however, basic similarities between different temples at different sites help establish the regional style. The gopurams shown in Figure 7 are from the Minakshi temple at Madurai.

A last thought: As the similarities between the temples to Vishnu and Parshva at Khajuraho make clear (see Fig. 5), differences in the deity being worshipped did not result in different architectural styles. Where the Western religious tradition (including Christianity, Judaism, and Islam) has tended to worship the same god in different ways and structures, the Indian religious tradition worships different gods in much the same ways and structures subject to the regional variations noted above.

The Hindu Temple

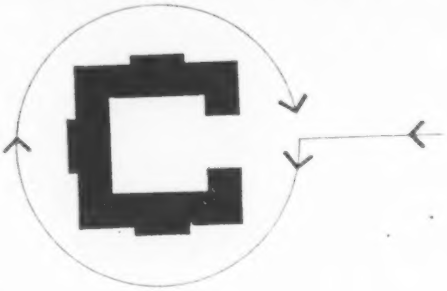

Fig. 1

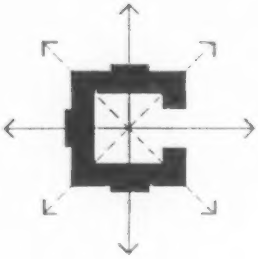

Fig. 2

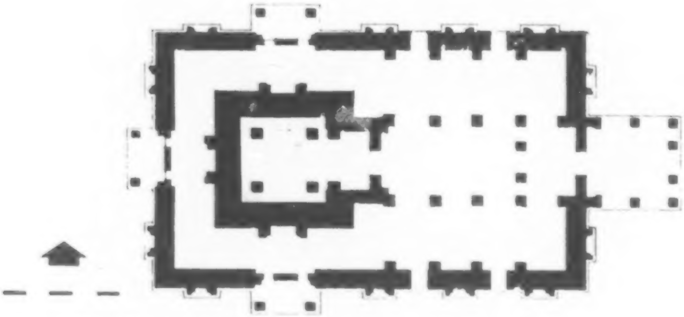

Fig. 3

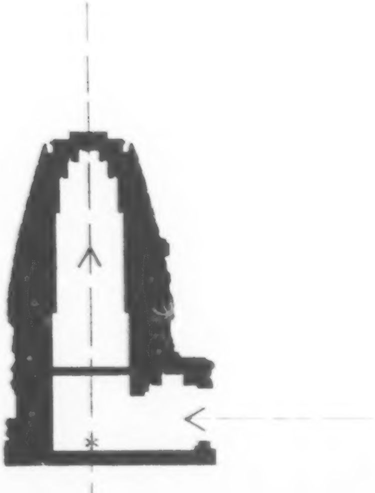

Fig. 4

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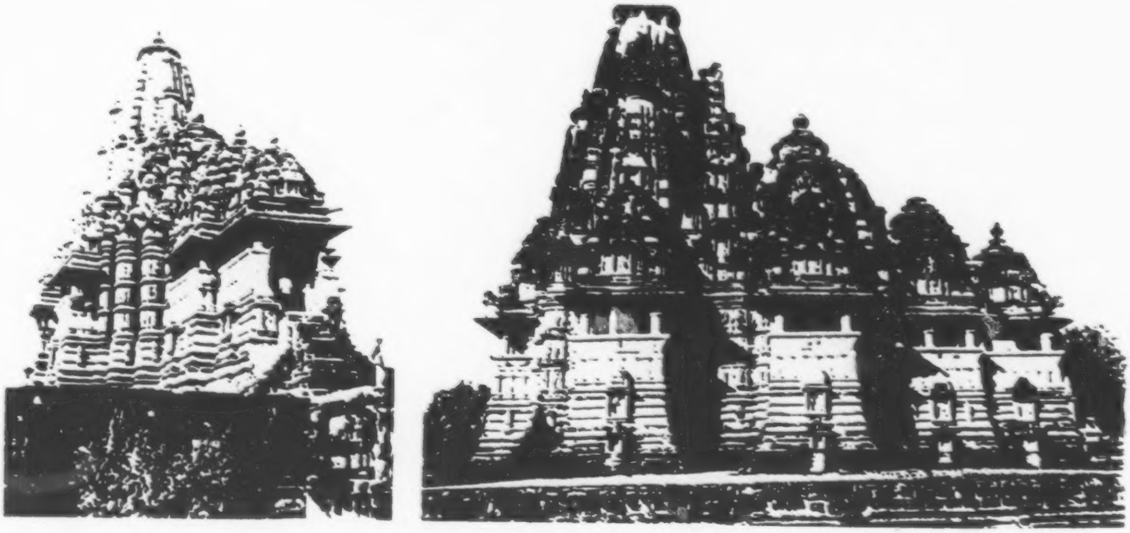
All diagrams and illustrations from
Michell, George. The Hindu Temple. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988.

The Northern Indian Temple - Khajuraho



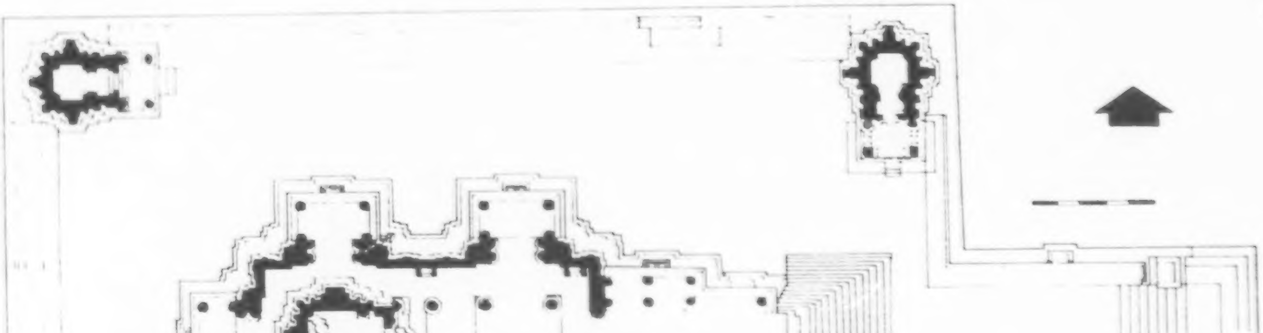


Fig. 5

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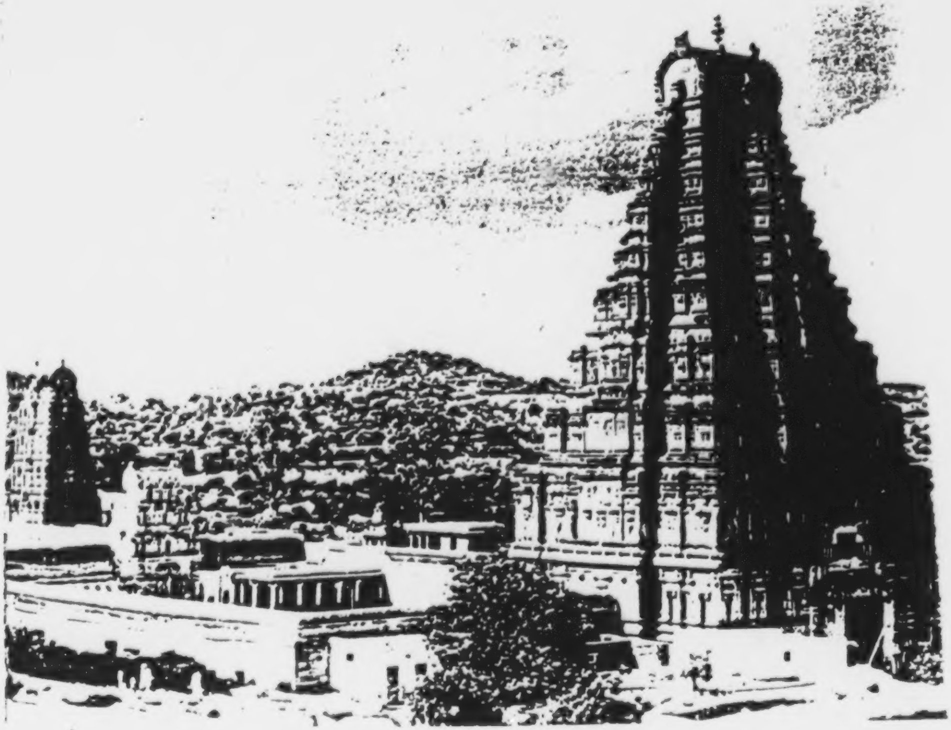
The Southern Indian Temple



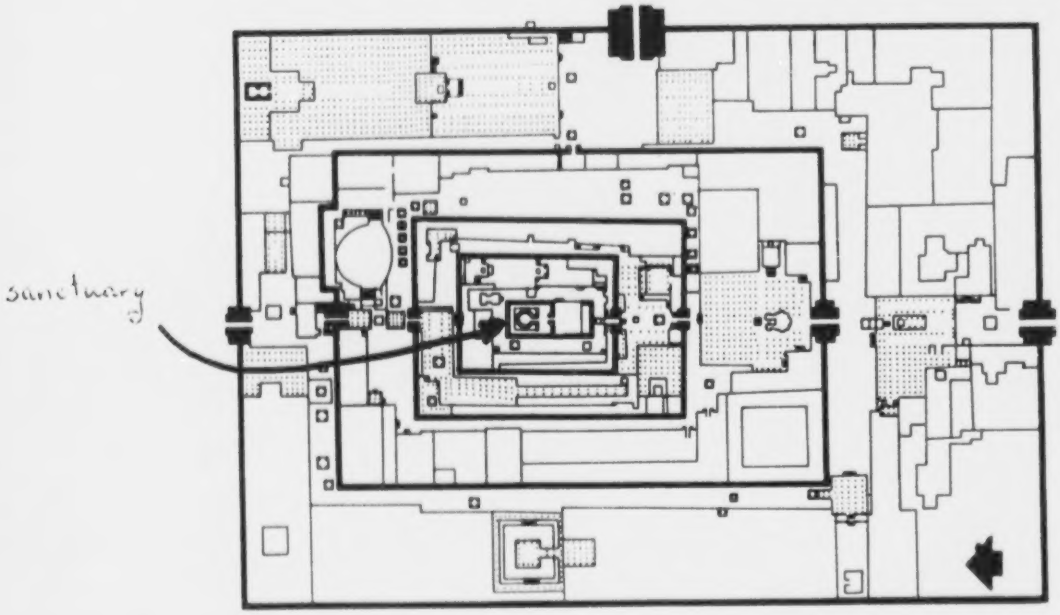


Fig. 6

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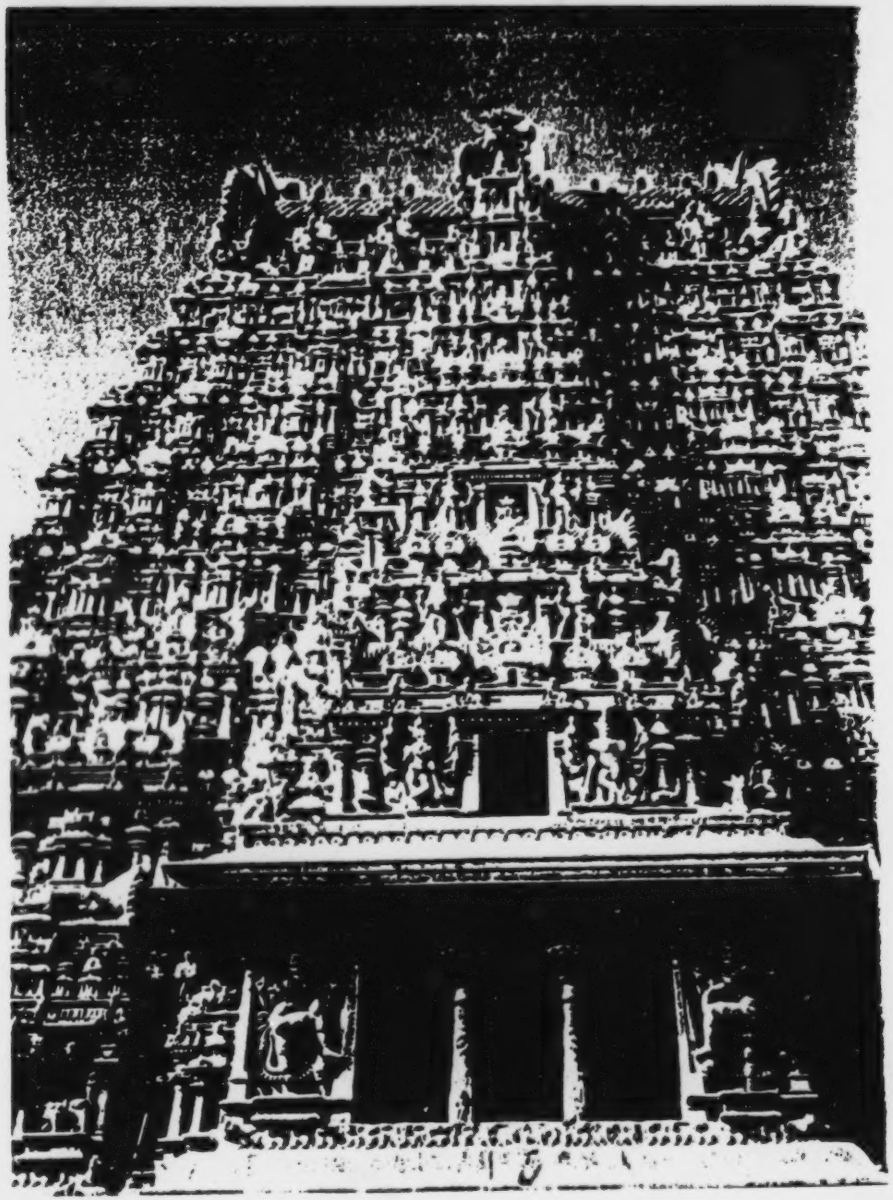
Southern Indian Gopurams



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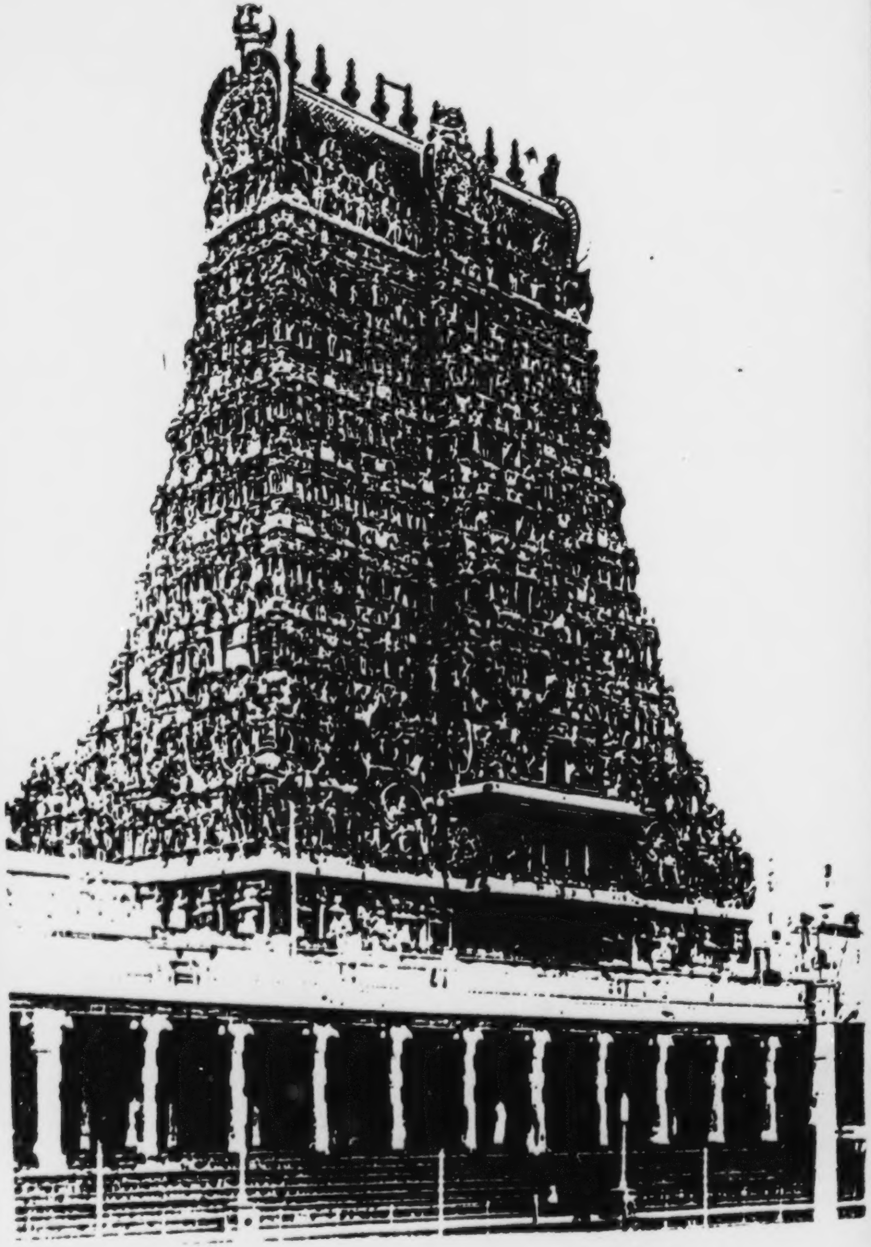

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Fig. 7

Synopsis of Kalidasa's Shakuntala

Two pages of introductory material from A Treasury of Asian Literature edited by John D. Yohannan are included which provide some background on the conventions of Classical Indian theater. Depending upon the students' background, the play offers interesting opportunities for comparison with (1) Greek theater and (2) the comedies of William Shakespeare, with whom Kalidasa has often been likened. Although written in about the fifth century C.E., the play is set in the mythical Vedic age. For this reason, there are references to the Vedic gods and to ritual fire sacrifices. By the time of Kalidasa's writing, these gods had been absorbed into the broader Hindu pantheon and sacrifice had been reinterpreted. The presence of these elements from the mythical past would not have confused Kalidasa's audiences, however, any more than references to Zeus, Poseidon, or the Trojan War would confuse modern audiences.

The play in its entirety may be too long for some. What follows is a synopsis of the play which might be used to shorten the actual reading obligation. Alternatively, different groups of students might read different acts, create their own synopses, and share them with classmates. The acting out of some scenes might also be appealing. The parenthetical remarks which follow some of the acts contain suggestions for topics which could be discussed to enhance students' understanding of aspects of Hindu belief and society.

Act I: While hunting, Dushyanta, King of India, comes upon three maidens in a sacred grove. He is much taken with the beauty and virtue of Shakuntala, one of these. Concealing his royal identity, he makes his presence known to the maidens in order to find out more about her. In conversation, Dushyanta learns that Shakuntala is the daughter of a kshatriya holy man and Menaka, a nymph sent by the gods to distract him from his holy meditations. A young woman now, Shakuntala is the ward of Kanwa, chief of an order of hermits. In the midst of the interview, word arrives that the King is hunting in the neighborhood, and the women quickly realize with whom they are speaking. At the end of the act, Shakuntala shyly (but unmistakably) signals her own interest in the handsome royal hunter.

Act II: The act opens with a brief summary of Act I. The King looks for an excuse to visit the hermitage in order to see Shakuntala again. Two hermits arrive, inviting the King to enjoy the hospitality of their forest dwelling which he readily accepts. (This is a very short act, but it touches upon issues of marriageability, the relative value of things material vs. things spiritual, and the position/responsibilities of kings in Indian society.)

Act III, Prelude: It is announced that Shakuntala is consumed with fever.

Act III: Dushyanta pines for Shakuntala, bemoaning his fate as a smitten and frustrated lover. Eavesdropping on a conversation between Shakuntala and her handmaidens, he learns that the cause of her fever is her love for him. Overjoyed, the King openly professes his love to her. Their meeting is interrupted by the arrival of the female head of the hermitage who has come to tend Shakuntala's "illness". (The act offers insights on the "proper" behavior of a man and woman during courtship.)

Act IV, Prelude: The marriage of Dushyanta and Shakuntala has occurred offstage, and Dushyanta has returned to the capital. Distracted by her love and longing, Shakuntala is disrespectful to a powerful sage who lays a curse upon her: the object of her affection, Dushyanta, will completely lose his memory of her and of their love. As a concession to the pleas of her handmaidens, the sage modifies the curse: Dushyanta will regain his memory when he sees again the signet ring he has left with Shakuntala as a symbol of their union.

Act IV: No word has arrived at the hermitage from the King despite the fact that Shakuntala bears his child. Her foster-father Kanwa returns from his own travels, blesses the union, and sends her off to the King's court despite the sadness which her departure brings to the hermitage's residents. (A hymn excerpt from the Rig-Veda discusses the importance of sacrifice. Kanwa's fatherly advice gives insight to a woman's/wife's place in Hindu royal society. There are also interesting parallels drawn between natural and human events which help reinforce the sense of an underlying unity to the Universe despite seeming differences.)

Act V: Dushyanta already has two wives. When Shakuntala is presented to the King by her attendants, he has no memory of his love for her, their marriage, or the conception of their child. He rejects her claims as deceitful ambition. Shakuntala realizes that the signet ring fell off her finger while she did worship at a holy spring. The King is torn between conflicting responsibilities: not to be an adulterer (if Shankuntala is lying) but not to mistreat his lawful wife (if she is telling the truth). It is decided that she will live separately at Court until the birth of the child. Seers have prophesized that the King's first-born will bear certain auspicious marks. If Shakuntala's child bears these marks, her claims will be recognized. (This act again addresses issues of a king's duties, a wife's duties, the centrality of fire sacrifice and ritual purity to Vedic religion.)

Act VI, Prelude: A fisherman has been arrested for stealing the King's signet ring. He pleads his innocence saying that he found the ring inside a fish he had caught. The ring is returned to Dushyanta who generously rewards the fisherman and regains his memory. (The fisherman offers short insights on caste obligations regarding occupation.)

Act VI: The King is completely distracted by remorse for his treatment of Shakuntala who has disappeared from the palace. At the end of the act, he is summoned to the heavens by Matali, Indra's charioteer. The god has commanded that Dushyanta lead the divine hosts in battle against an unruly race of giant demons. (The relationship which is portrayed between the King and his Brahmin jester Mathavya gently ridicules Brahmins. Signs of this can also be seen in Act II.)

Act VII: Victorious over the demons, Dushyanta is brought to a sacred grove in the heavens. There, he encounters a spirited child named Sarvadamana who bears an uncanny resemblance to the King himself. The King immediately feels great affection for the boy whose name means "all-mastering" and whose palms bear the mark of the lotus blossom: the boy is his own and Shakuntala's son. She appears, clad as a widow, and the two lovers are reunited at last. (The last few pages of this act give insight to the workings of karma and dharma, to the importance of offerings in order to maintain the blessings of the gods, and to the ultimate goal of liberation from reincarnation. This act also suggests parallels between human events and those which occur among the Vedic gods. In combination with Act IV, the essential unity of nature, humans, and the gods is made clear. The play ends in a sacred grove (in the heavens) as it began in a sacred grove (on earth) reinforcing the circularity of time and events.)

Shakuntala by Kálidása

[FLOURISHED ABOUT 5TH CENTURY A.D.]

TRANSLATED BY M. MONIER-WILLIAMS [1819-1899]

* * *

For Western readers at any rate, the high-water mark of not only Indian but perhaps all Asian literature must be represented by *Shakuntala*. Since this drama was introduced to European readers by Sir William Jones in the late 18th century, it has delighted—besides Goethe, who adopted its form of the prologue for his *Faust*—countless readers and probably as many attendants of the professional and amateur stage. *Shakuntala* has that rare ability of a translated work to efface differences of race, culture and language and to speak directly across the page or the footlights.

This fact is the more remarkable since the conventions of the Indian stage are not the same as those of the Western, though attempts have been made to establish the fact of a Greek influence. The key factor in the Indian drama is sentiment. This is not the same thing as emotion, which is personal and might therefore be disagreeable. It is rather a disinterested and hence always pleasant feeling, produced in the reader or viewer by the proper blending of characters, time, place, actor's gestures and voice, poetic and rhetorical devices, etc. The play employs all these to create, not a reasonable facsimile of life, but a pleasurable sense of life without its accidental defects. Thus the Indian drama is frankly romantic and escapist.

To this end, there is excluded from the viewer's sight all unpleasant action capable of marring the delicate sentiment after which the dramatist is striving. Ideally, there must be on the stage no fighting or other violence, no deaths, no marriages or other rituals, not even any kissing. The sense of all these things happening must be suggested, however, and in this lies the art of the Indian drama. One is tempted to see in this principle an analogy to T. S. Eliot's concept of the "objective correlative," that emotion produced in the reader by a right combination of poetic factors and corresponding to, but not identical with, the emotion experienced by the author.

Yet despite obvious differences, *Shakuntala* must appear to readers of poetic drama to belong to the same genre as *The Tempest* or *As You Like It*. Here are the charmingly contrasted jaded court and unspoilt forest; the cynically commenting king's

attendant, a sort of Brahman Touchstone; the delightfully coy maidens who serve Shakuntala (these may indeed recall three little maids from another Asian seminary!); and the comic relief of the constabulary. But Kálidása's true kinship with Shakespeare rests upon his status as a poet of nature. He is most characteristic in the lyrical passages descriptive of the fauna and flora of his native land. Even the topmost achievement of this drama, its heroine, is in part creditable to her creator's love of wild life. For Shakuntala is, as it were, half bird (like her counterpart Rima in Hudson's *Green Mansions*), her name being derived from the *shakuntas* or birds with which she held such easy converse. Yet it is as womankind that she ultimately triumphs. The ordeal which she brings upon herself (by an unthinking show of inhospitality to the sage Durvasas while distracted by love) matures her in the knowledge of love and prepares her for the life which, by her hitherto secret noble origin, she was destined to live.

The character of King Dushyanta is somewhat less sympathetic. He has a natural Brahmanical stiffness, but he labors under the greater difficulty—occasioned by the *Mahabharata* legend which provides the story—of having to treat the girl Shakuntala somewhat cavalierly. To be sure Kálidása has considerably psychologized the story. He explains the king's forgetfulness of his unceremonious marriage to Shakuntala by the curse which Durvasas places upon the lovers. Similarly, recollection is effected by the recovery of the lost ring which symbolizes their union. This much supernatural machinery we can accept as easily as we do Shakespeare's ghosts or fairies.

What the reader may miss in Kálidása—and it chiefly has been held against him by those who would refuse him a place beside the great dramatists of the world—is the quality which Matthew Arnold called "high seriousness." There are in Indian drama no probings of the dark recesses of the human heart, as in Greek or Elizabethan tragedy. Tragedy, indeed, there cannot be. Hinduism does not grant sufficient free will to man to permit of his grappling with the moral ambiguities that produce tragedy. Sadness and melancholy there may be; but the ultimate destinies are well controlled, and sunlight at last prevails.

From what little is known of Kálidása, the moderacy of his temperament would further conduce to such happy resolution of human problems. The hallmark of his work has been said to be a Vergilian golden mean. The Olympian—or shall we say Himalayan—calm with which he views the affairs of men may indeed denote the completeness with which he accepted the tenets of Hinduism. From his name it would appear that he was a follower of Kali, the consort of Shiva; but whether Vishnuite or Shivaite, he must have found in the caste system of Brahmanism, and in the several philosophies which expounded its teachings, a proper ordering of the values he would live by. Quite appropriately he marks the zenith in that great flowering of Sanskrit literature which occurred after Buddhism had failed permanently to alter the religion of the Hindus.

* * *

Savitri

By this point, students have had considerable exposure to the place of women in Hindu society. *Savitri* is one of many tales that have been retold across generations to teach girls their proper *dharma*, To what extent *is* Savitri a good example of the proper Hindu daughter, wife, and daughter-in-law? Does she seem "independent"? Do any of her actions break from tradition? If so, which ones? And, if so, why did this story remain so popular?

A separate issue to consider: What does the wish for a hundred sons for her father and for her own immediate family suggest about the value of women in traditional society? A discussion of *purdah*, the seclusion of women practiced by later generations of (primarily) upper caste Hindus might be appropriate here. *Purdah* evolved out of the interaction of Muslims and Hindus during the centuries of Muslim domination of most of India and was one of the relatively few practices on which the two religious traditions agreed. A discussion of *suttee* might also be appropriate. Among some upper caste Hindus, there was an expectation that a widow would throw herself on her husband's funeral pyre -- as an act of devotion to the deceased husband and as an expression of faith. As the *Bhagavad-Gita* states, that which is born surely dies and that which dies is surely reborn. If the body is merely a container for the *atman*, of what importance is it, especially in the face of the good *karma* which should result from such an act of wifely devotion?

Modern Indian society may also be a focus for a discussion of the position/value of women. There is a disproportion of males to females in Indian society which is all but impossible to explain in terms of natural demographics. The statistical evidence suggests that more females die in Indian society than in virtually any other society on the planet. Different explanations have been offered: female infanticide, a higher death rate for girls as a family devotes its (potentially quite scarce) resources to its boys, a less than serious official attitude to a phenomenon in which new brides suffer fatal "accidents" shortly after their marriage. The upcoming conference on Women's Rights to be held in China may prove to be a valuable resource in examining the position of women around the globe. Stay tuned!

The Bhagavad-Gita
Sources of Indian Tradition. Ainslie T. Embree, ed. New York: Columbia University
Press, 1988.

The Bhagavad-Gita: Action and Devotion

"The Bhagavad-Gita (Song of the Lord) may be considered the most typical expression of Hinduism as a whole and an authoritative manual of the popular cult of Krishna in particular."

"Even in very early times there had existed, side by side with the...Vedic religion, several other religious traditions. (T)hese indigenous religions eventually found a place under the broad mantle of the Vedic religions. The gradual decline of Brahmanism, combined with competition from Buddhism and Jainism, afforded the popular religions an opportunity to assert themselves...At the same time, a common allegiance to the authority of the Veda provided a thin, but nonetheless significant, thread of unity amid (the) variety of gods and religious practices...One significant constituent of this all-embracing Hinduism was the worship of Krishna (who was originally a tribal god)."

"The Gita forms part of the great epic of India, the Mahabharata....Chiefly due to its numerous and elevated passages on the subjects of wisdom, duty, and liberation from mundane existence, the epic, which probably underwent its last major revision in the fourth century, in the Gupta period, became sacred to later Hindus as part of the scriptures...Although the Gita mainly (focuses upon) the teachings of Krishna, it was also subjected, once included in the epic, to the final process of Brahmanic revision."

"The Gita differed from the Upanishads, as well as from Buddhism and Jainism, first and foremost in its teaching about the goal of human life. The Upanishads generally put forth the view that, because this world and human existence are in some sense unreal, one should renounce this worldly life and aim at realizing the essential identity of one's soul with the Universal Self, which is the only absolute reality. The Upanishadic attitude toward life and society is fundamentally individualistic. The Gita, on the other hand, teaches that one has a duty to promote the stability, solidarity and progress of society. Society can function properly only on the principle of the ethical interdependence of its various constituents. As an essential constituent of society, therefore, one must have an active awareness of one's social obligations. The...specific social obligations of different types of persons are, according to the Gita, best embodies in the doctrine of the four classes (i.e., the caste system). The Gita, however, emphasizes the metaphysical significance of that scheme, according to which all classes are equal (in that all are working towards ultimate liberation from samsara) and essential (to the increasing purification of atman which culminates in moksha) ...."

The second fundamental point on which the Gita differs from Upanishadic thought follows logically from the first. The Upanishadic ideal of spiritual emancipation through knowledge involves the acceptance of the unreal character of the phenomenal world. Through one's actions, consciously or unconsciously, one becomes involved in the tentacles of this fictitious world and is thus removed farther and farther from his goal (of liberation). A complete abnegation of action, therefore, came to be regarded almost as a *sine qua non* of a true seeker's spiritual quest. The ideal of social integrity through (the interdependence of separate castes which is promoted) by the Gita, on the other hand, implies an active way of life. The activism inculcated by the Gita, however...is tinged perhaps under the influence of the Upanishads and Buddhist thought -- with an element of renunciation. It argues that action, as such, is not detrimental to one's attainment of his spiritual goal. It is only one's attachment to the fruits (i.e., the results) of actions that keeps one eternally involved in the cycle of birth and death. The Gita, therefore, teaches the art of "acting and yet not acting," i.e, acting without becoming personally involved in the action."

"Whereas Vedic ritual practices were exculsive in character, the Gita sponsors a way of spiritual life in which all can prticipate. It is the (life) of devotion (bhakti). In contrast to ritual sacrifice, the Gita offers a concept of sacrifice embracing all actions done in fulfillment of one's (particular) dharma without attachment to (its results).* This way of devotion presupposes the recognition of a personal god...The devotee serves that God as a loyal servant, always craving some kind of personal communion with Him. The criterion of true worship...is the earnestness, the faith, and the sense of complete surrender to the Divine on the part of the devotee. The way of devotion is thus simple, more direct, and more effective than any other religious practice."

"The great virtue of the Gita is that, instead of dilating upon the points of difference among the various systems of thought and practice, it emphasizes the points of agreement and thereby brings about a philosophical and religious synthesis. We have already suggested that the Gita underwent a kind of Brahmanic reorientation. One of the more significant results of this reorientation, as far as the personality of Krisha is concerned, was that this tribal god, who was essentially non-Vedic in origin...came to be regarded as an incarnation of the Vedic god Vishnu."

"The Gita need not be approached as if it were a systematic treatise, in which the principal subject is treated with scientific or logical rigor. Being included in the popular epic, the Gita also inherited epic characteristics of style and presentation. Nevertheless, there should be no ambiguity so far as its principal teachings are concerned."

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*In other words, the proper action is taken because it is the proper thing to do, not because one hopes for some sort of divine reward.

The Bhagavad-Gita can be difficult in terms of its style and its content. For these reasons, the student excerpt is quite brief, but the ideas expressed in this excerpt permit a review of basic concepts of Hinduism as it had evolved by the early Common Era. Such concepts include dharma, karma, samsara and the transmigration of the soul (reincarnation), the relationship between the individual soul (atman) and the Universal Soul (Brahman) in its own right and as the basis for bhakti devotion by an individual human devotee to one of the divine incarnations of Brahman, and the evolution of religious practice from ritual sacrifice to knowledge to personal devotion. It would seem appropriate to remind students that modern Hinduism retains elements of all three approaches to religious practice. In addition, as the notes from Ainslie T. Embree suggest, Krishna's place of importance in the Gita is a good example of how "Hinduism" gradually emerged from the blending of Aryan (Vedic) gods with those of the conquered Dravidians.

BASIC RULES FOR JAIN MENDICANTS

Five great vows (*mahāvrata*):
1. *ahimsā*: causing no harm
2. *satya*: speaking only the truth
3. *asteya*: not taking what is not freely given
4. *brahmacarya*: celibacy
5. *aparigraha*: non-possession

Eight matrices of doctrine (*pravacana-mātrkā*):
- 3 Concealments or Restraints (*gupti*):
    1. restraint of the mind
    2. restraint of the body
    3. restraint of speech
- 5 Careful Actions or Rules of Conduct (*samiti*):
    4. care in walking
    5. care in speaking
    6. care in accepting alms
    7. care in picking up and putting down objects
    8. care in excretory functions

Six daily obligatory actions (*āvaśyaka*):

1. equanimity (*sāmāyika*)
2. praise of the 24 Jinas (*caturvimśati stava*)
3. praise of one's teacher (*vandanaka / guru vandana*)
4. repentance of past karmically negative actions (*pratikramaṇa*)
5. abandonment of the body (*kāyotsarga*)
6. (abstaining from future karmically negative actions (*prātyākhyaṇa*)

Ten rules of monastic deportment:
1. voluntarism: no compulsion in monastic activities
2. repentance for misconduct
3. assent to and acceptance of the preceptor's teachings
4. awareness of all actions
5. awareness of completion of actions
6. seeking permission of superior to perform actions for self
7. seeking permission of superior to perform actions for others
8. not keeping anything secret from fellow monks
9. rendering services to the monastic community in terms of food, medicine, robes, etc.
10. approaching a teacher in another monastic community for a limited period to obtain specialized learning

Notes to Accompany "Basic Rules for Jain Mendicants"

The life of a Jain mendicant is not an easy one as this sheet will make clear. As they are understood and implemented, the five great vows (*Mahavratas*) place great physical, mental, and spiritual demands upon male and female mendicants. The following "basic rules" are all meant to aid the mendicant in adhering to the vows and thereby achieving the reduction of *karma* which is his or her fundamental goal.

The Three Restraints -- of mind, body, and speech -- refer to one aspect of the thrice three-fold vows. Violence in the Jain tradition is not confined to violent action! The Five Careful Actions refer to aspects of the daily routine of mendicants. Precisely because these are daily, routine actions, mendicants must always be guarded, i.e. thoughtful or aware, while performing them; these actions must not become mindless habit. Care must be taken in walking to avoid stepping on a living thing, thus doing it harm. Most mendicants carry a small handbroom with which to sweep the ground before them as they walk. Care must be taken in speaking. This is not just a matter of *what* it said. Care must also be taken (1) to prevent insects from flying into one's open mouth and (2) to protect microscopic beings from being injured by the force of breathing/the vibrations of speech. It is for this reason that most mendicants carry what looks like a surgeon's face mask to cover their mouths when they speak. Some sects wear the masks all the time; others hold the masks over their mouths as they speak. This is one of the idiosyncratic differences of practice which separate the Jains into sects and subsects! Care must be taken in accepting alms (which generally means food in the Jain setting). Many foods are forbidden to Jain mendicants as "Key Concepts in Jain Asceticism" will make clear. Again, however, it is not just a question of *what* is accepted, but *how* it is accepted. A Jain mendicant may not ask for anything because that would betoken desire, a form of attachment; s/he is expected simply to nod in acceptance or refusal of alms. The amount of "freely given" alms is also left to the laity to determine. Care in picking up and putting down objects is necessary to avoid injury to other living things as is care in excretory functions.

The Six Daily Obligatory Actions help build the physical, mental, and spiritual discipline needed to fulfil the mendicant life. Equanimity, for example, reinforces *ahimsa* and non-attachment. See SR17 for a scriptural passage dealing with this mental state. Praise of the *jinas* and praise for one's own teacher express respect for their advanced spiritual achievement. Implicit in such praise is the mendicant's desire to follow in their path. Repentance for past karmically negative actions and abstaining from such actions in the future again refers back to the thrice three-fold vows. The fifth action refers to a standing meditative posture which is sometimes held for hours. Daily practice increases the ability to master balance and concentration.

The Ten Rules of Monastic Deportment seem quite self-explanatory and remind of similar rules imposed on monastic groups in other religious traditions.

KEY CONCEPTS IN JAIN ASCETICISM (*TAPAS*)

Twelve types of austerities or asceticism:

6 outer forms of *tapas*:

1. complete fasting
2. eating limited amounts
3. eating only certain foods
4. abstaining from tasty foods
5. mortification of the flesh
6. guarding the limbs, i.e., avoiding that which can cause temptation

6 inner forms of *tapas*:

1. confession of and expiation for transgressions
2. respecting mendicants (or senior mendicants if one is a mendicant)
3. assisting mendicants (or to other mendicants)
4. studying, memorizing, and expounding the teachings
5. meditation
6. abandoning the body and all egoism by ignoring bodily wants

Twenty-two types of food that are not to be eaten (*abhaksya*)

1. banyan tree pods
2. paraspipal tree pods
3. pipal tree pods
4. fig tree pods
5. black fig tree pods
6. honey
7. alcohol
8. meat
9. butter
10. snow
11. poison
12. hailstones
13. clay
14. eating at night
15. vegetables and fruit with many seeds
16. foods with many souls
17. certain kinds of pickle
18. buttermilk in tiny lumps
19. eggplant
20. unknown fruits and flowers
21. insignificant fruits
22. food which has become tainted

Other key concepts:

upavāsa
not eating green vegetables
boiled water

Notes to Accompany "Key Concepts in Jain Asceticism"

In Jainism, asceticism is the key to getting rid of accumulated karma which limits the soul and perpetuates the cycle of birth-life-redeath that is samsara. Asceticism generates spiritual "heat" which burns away karma. Although it is the chosen way of life for mendicants, lay people also practice asceticism in various forms and to varying extents. The external forms are readily apparent to others and help demonstrate one's piety publicly. They also suggest the existence of a heightened inner spiritual state. Ascetic fasting takes many forms in Jainism and is especially expected of Jain women. Some fasts are total, i.e., no food and no water; others are water-only. There are several types of prescribed fasts of varying durations, the longest being a thirty-one day water-only fast generally only undertaken once in a lifetime! Variations on fasting can also take the form of only eating limited amounts, only eating certain foods, or only eating on certain days. What is important from the point of view of asceticism and the improvment of one's spiritual condition is that the decision to fast (or undertake other ascetic practices) be deliberately made and followed. Not eating for a day because one has been too busy to eat, for example, does not bring spiritual improvement; to decide not to eat on a certain day as an ascetic act does. Mortification of the flesh in Jainsim most often takes the form of pulling out all one's hair in emulation of Mahavira and the other jinas. Mendicants do this twice annually. It is an obvious demonstration of having gotten beyond pain and ego-related concerns for appearance.

Most of the inner forms of asceticism are fairly common to most religious traditions. Only the last one may need some explaining. Jain mendicants should not be concerned with outward appearances, and this can be expressed in ways such as not wearing clothes (for Digambara monks), not bathing, not brushing one's teeth. In part this emulates the jinas' behavior; in part, it minimizes action thus minimizing the karmic consequences of actions. It is probably obvious that mendicants are expected to maintain a much greater degree of attention to all the various details of ascetic practice than is expected of lay people -- as in most organized religious traditions.

The list of foods that are not to be eaten may seem somewhat odd to non-Jains, but they represent traditions which are ancient and which give first consideration to the practice of ahimsa. The first five "pods" listed are not generally foods at all, but they were integral to certain Brahminic rites. By listing them first and avoiding their use altogether, Jainism signals its distinctness from the Vedic traditions. Honey was traditionally produced by smoking the bees out of their hives. As this is a violent act and results in the deaths of bees, it is contrary to ahimsa. Similarly, alcohol is the product of fermentation, a process in which microorganisms are killed. It should be evident that practicing Jains are vegetarians, no meats and no eggs. Butter is the product of the violent act of churning. Snow, hailstones, and clay are not generally foods, and they are believed to contain multitudes of single-celled beings which would be killed if ingested. To ingest poison is to commit self-violence and is contrary to ahimsa. Eating at night risks swallowing insects. In addition, there is a likelihood that insects would be drawn to any flame (of a candle or cookfire) in which they might be burned. Foods with many seeds contain the potential for much life; to eat them is violent. Root vegetables, in particular, are thought to house many souls. Eating them is violent as is the act of harvesting root vegetables; they are ripped out of the earth and the plant dies as a result of being harvested. Pickles and buttermilk often involve fermentation; see alcohol above! Eggplant has many seeds and is not native to India. Because unknown fruits and flowers may contain souls, may be the result of violent actions, may be poison, they should not be eaten. I have not discovered the reason(s) for the prohibition against insignificant, i.e., tiny, fruits, but it may refer to spices. Jain mendicants, in particular, tend to avoid spices because these enhance flavor. Enhanced flavor increases the pleasure of eating, but mendicants are trying to overcome the pains and pleasures of samsara. Svetambara monks and nuns reduce this temptation by mixing together all that they have received as alms. Tainted food (#22) suggests spoiled food, probably due to fermentation.

Upavasa refers to the practice of not eating certain foods, especially green leafy vegetables, on certain days of the month. Such green vegetables are home (and food) for insects and microorganisms which are likely to be killed in the process of cooking and eating the vegetables. In the modern age, such vegetables may also be the result of (non-Jain) farmers using pesticides. Recall that the thrice three-fold vows call for not consenting to violence even if someone else commits it! Lastly, boiling water kills microorganisms and is an act of himsa, violence.

If the choice is made to develop these key concepts in depth with a class, it should be stressed that there is a significant degree of flexibility in the application of many of these hygenic/dietary/culinary guidelines within individual families and between different regions of India. Similarly, Jains in Great Britain or North America (both of which have growing Jain communities, a relatively recent phenomenon) may not adhere precisely to these guidelines. It is important to stress that Jainism is a living, evolving tradition; it is not just a set of rules handed down over 2500 years! Adaptations to "modern" life may be controversial, but they will likely be accepted (by some within the overall Jain community) as long as they do not trangress against the moral imperative of ahimsa. One final note: whatever their usual practices, many families and individuals become more observant of traditional guidelines during holiday periods. In this, as in many other aspects, Jainism resembles many of the world's religious traditions.

Asoka's Rock Edicts

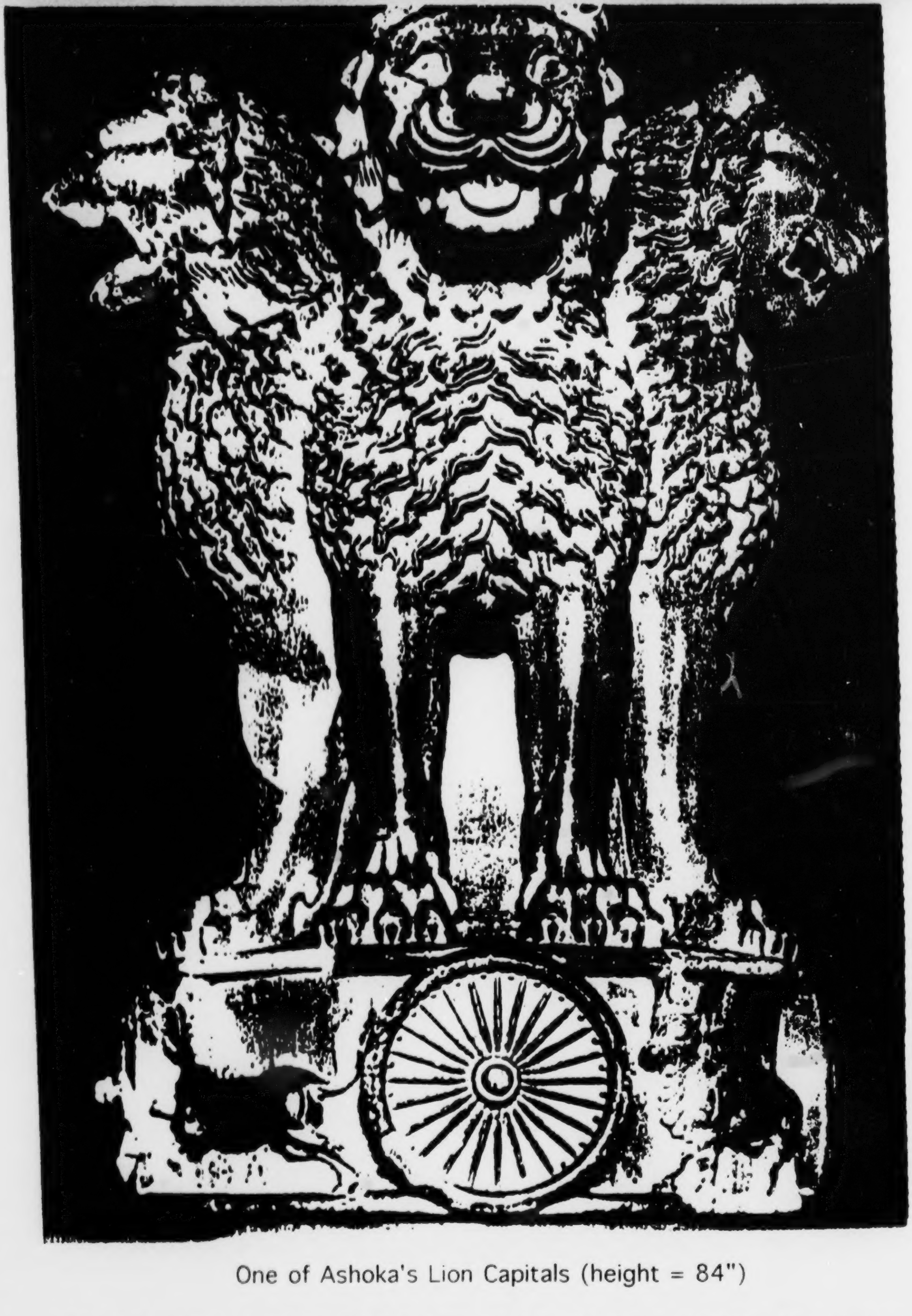
The third Mauryan emperor, Asoka (also Ashoka) reigned from about 270-233 B.C.E. He succeeded in uniting most of northern and central India through a series of wars fought early in his reign. The conquest of the east central state of Kalinga was particularly brutal and bloody, so much so that Asoka subsequently abandoned warfare and embraced Buddhism. He changed elements of his own lifestyle and encouraged his subjects to do the same -- in part by having a series of edicts carved into rock faces where they could easily be seen by passers-by. To this same end, he had highly polished, inscribed sandstone columns erected throughout the empire, especially at places identified with the Buddha's life and career. Asoka's artisans used local vernaculars rather than the scholarly Sanskrit in order to increase the size of the reading audience (and perhaps to undermine the authority of the Brahmins for whom Sanskrit was the language of culture and religion).

Asoka probably hoped that the peaceful message of Buddhism would be a useful support to the continued unity and longevity of the Mauryan Empire. That he did not completely abandon the Vedic Hindu gods is suggested by his title ("Beloved of the Gods"), and it is possible that his conversion to the Buddhist way of life was partly inspired by a fear of the karmic consequences of his bloodshedding in the name of dynastic and personal glory. The capitals which top these columns also suggest a mix of religio-philosophic allegiance. Some of the capitals depict four lions which are positioned above four dharmachakras, wheels of the law (of samsara). It is thought that the lions themselves originally supported a large dharmachakra on their backs. Lions are an enduring symbol of royalty across many cultures; in this case, of Asoka and of Siddhartha Gautama, the historic Buddha. Some art historians also suggest that dharmachakras were used as aniconic representations of the Buddha himself during the period of Asoka's reign. On the other hand, some of the columns are topped by bulls which are generally associated with Shiva in Hindu iconography. The Buddha was also born under the zodiac sign of the bull, however, so many interpretations are possible. It is probable that mixing the capitals was thought to be a way to ingratiate the content of the edicts with a mixed Buddhist-Hindu population. It may also be that Asoka was trying to safeguard his own atman, covering his bets so to speak, by drawing upon the imagery of both religious traditions.

There is a certain self-serving nature to the edicts, but they do provide a sense of what Asoka tried to accomplish -- for himself and for others, at the time of his reign and into the future. His career might be a point of departure for a discussion of several current issues in American society. He seems to have had an active environmental awareness, the product of his concern for the well-being of humans and animals. Rejection of animals as sources of meat, fur, and recreation; reforestation for shade and sustenance; respect for life in its varied forms are all issues which could be explored in this way. A discussion of the death penalty in modern America could also grow out of Asoka's edicts. It is interesting to note that, despite the sentiments expressed at the end of the excerpt from the Seventh Pillar Edict, Asoka did not abolish the death penalty in his empire.

Asoka's promotion of (religious) toleration as a way to foster peaceful relations within a diverse society might also provoke interesting discussion given the apparent polarizing trend in current American discourse on a wide range of issues: political partisanship, abortion, gun control, gay/lesbian rights, euthanasia, genetic screenings. Is toleration a workable approach to dealing with these issues? How does one foster toleration? Can toleration be legislated?

A last note: Modern India has taken the lion capital as one of its state symbols. Paper currency carries the image of the capital as do many other official documents. Like Asoka, modern India has as its goal the creation of a unified state living in peace with itself and its neighbors.



One of Ashoka's Lion Capitals (height = 84")

Lee, Sherman. A History of Far Eastern Art. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1982.

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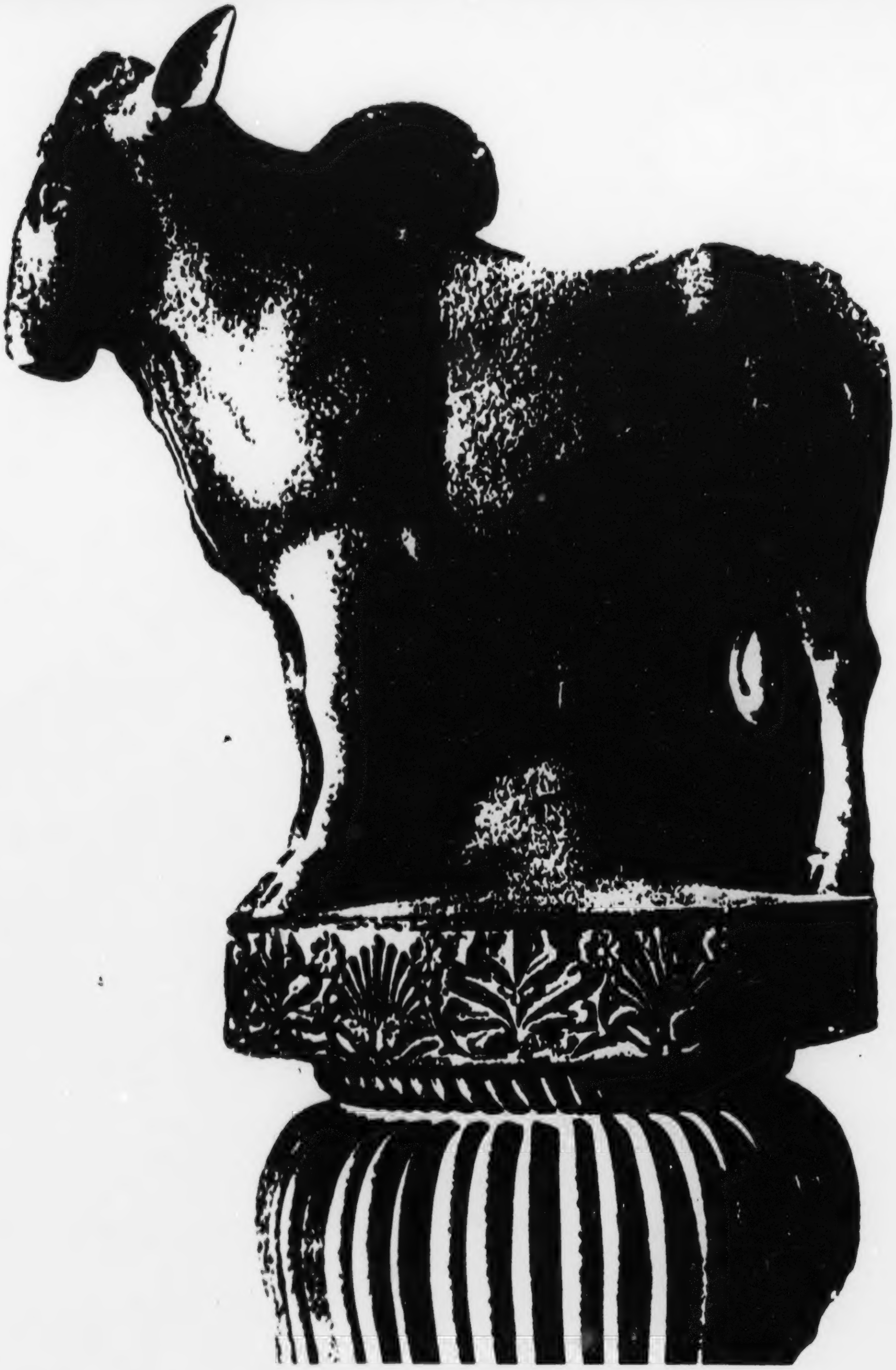

One of Ashoka's Bull Capitals (height = 93")

Lee, Sherman. A History of Far Eastern Art. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1984.

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Possible Discussion Questions to Accompany Unit on Classical India

In a world of growing population and diminishing resources, what responsibility, if any, does the modern age have towards the discovery and preservation of artifacts from ancient civilizations? Many ancient sites are located in modern nations which face pressing problems in the here and now. Should they divert resources to archaeology and site preservation? Should other, perhaps wealthier, nations contribute? What might be the advantages? the disadvantages?

How has Christianity evolved in the 2000 or so years of its existence? Would the first Christians recognize present institutions and practices? Compare the evolution of Christianity with the evolution of Hinduism. What patterns of change can be identified, if any? What differences? Compare the rationale of the Christian trinity with that of the Hindu trinity. Are there any similarities in the way these two are thought of by their respective followers? What part, if any, does asceticism play in Western religions? Gaze into a crystal ball and try to think of ways that Christianity might evolve in the future? (Islam is not included in these questions yet as its development occurs later in the course. If there are Muslim students in the class, however, the questions could be broadened.)

Is there any notion of karma in modern Western thinking? of dharma? Explain.

To what extent are the terms "redeath" and "rebirth" interchangeable in describing the cycle of reincarnation? What does each emphasize? What mood or reaction does each elicit?

Compare and contrast the beliefs of Hinduism, Jainism, and Buddhism. Issues to consider might include the following: the nature of time and of the Universe; the nature and role of karma/dharma/puja; polytheism vs. atheism; cognitive atheism vs. affective theism (esp. for Jainism and Buddhism). To what extent is it accurate for the Indian Constitution to lump all three groups together as Hindus? Which of these religious philosophies appeals most to you? Why? Which appeals least? Why?

Does the Jain doctrine of manysidedness sound at all familiar? Can you think of modern applications of this idea?

What factors or conditions might explain the widespread religious and intellectual questioning/doubt of the 6th and 5th centuries B.C.E. world? Can you think of any other periods in history when popular confidence in existing institutions was similarly shaken on a large scale? Are there any elements of widespread dissatisfaction operative in modern religion/society? Why do you think Indian civilization is so spiritually-minded? Does it seem more or less so than other ancient civilizations you have studied? Explain with examples. To what extent is America spiritually-minded?

Does the notion of spiritual equality sound familiar from other religious traditions? Explain with examples.

What elements of Mahavira's and/or the Buddha's life are unusual? To what extent are their lives similar? Do any of the events or elements of their lives seem familiar to you from other religious traditions? Why do you think people want religious founders to be "superhuman?" Does it make them more effective or less so? Why?

What aspects of Hinduism, Jainism, and Buddhism had particular appeal for the poor? Which of these aspects sound familiar from other religious traditions? Is it more important for a religion to appeal to the rich, the educated, or to the poor? Explain your choice.

What factors might explain Asoka's conversion to Buddhism? What other leaders have undergone dramatic conversion of faith (religious and/or political) in their lifetimes? What do conversions of this sort suggest about the person's habits of mind? Is it a good thing to change one's mind on fundamental issues of this sort?

Explain the Buddha as the "lesser vehicle" of Hinayana Buddhism and as the "greater vessel" of Mahayana Buddhism. What similarities do you see between Buddhism's split and that of Christianity into Catholicism and Protestantism?

Does the notion of the Buddha Maitreya (the Buddha of the Future) sound familiar from other religious traditions? Why do you think such figures occur in religion?

How can art communicate ideas? What examples can you point to from Hindu and Buddhist art? What examples can you think of in modern society?

Does art contribute to the spread of religion? If so, how? What are advantages and disadvantages of aniconic and iconic religious art?

Locate Gandhara and Mathura on a map of India. How might their respective locations have influenced the sculpture produced at these sites? What factors in general might influence an artist's choice of medium?

How did geography affect the spread of Buddhism in East Asia? How did ethnocentrism affect its spread? To what extent is American society open to ideas coming from other cultures? Explain with examples.

What patterns of political behavior can be identified between the states of Classical India? between India and other parts of the world? What lessons might the modern government of India draw from its early history? What lessons might India's enemies draw from her early history?

A Partial Listing of Sources for Audio-visuals, Maps, and Slides

VIDEOS

Corporation for Public Broadcasting
The Annenberg/CPB Project
901 E Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20004-2037
(1-800-LEARNER)

Pacific Century (10 one-hour programs)
China's Cosmopolitan Age: The Tang (1 one-hour program)
The Africans (9 one-hour programs)

Films for the Humanities and Sciences
P.O. Box 2053
Princeton, New Jersey 08543-2053
(1-800-257-5126)

This company offers a broad collection of videotape series as well as individual titles for sale or rent. They have separate catalogues for Asian Studies, African-American and African Studies, and European History. Specify which one(s) you want.

Home Vision/Public Media Videos
Box 800
Concord. MA. 01742
(1-800-262-8600)

Daimyo (30 mins.)
Art of the Dogon (24 mins.)
Dream Window: Japanese Gardens (57 mins)
Ming Garden (29 mins)
Suleyman the Magnificent (57 mins)
Basil Davidson's Africa (8 one-hour programs)
Great Railway Journeys: India (59 mins)
Joseph Campbell's The East and Buddhism (117 mins.)

Milestone Film and Video
275 West 96th St.
Suite 28C
New York, New York 10025
(1-212-865-7449)

A Day on the Grand Canal with the Emperor of China (47 mins)

MAPS

Rand McNally
P.O. Box 1906
Skokie, Illinois 60076-8906
(1-800-678-7263)

SLIDES

The following are all well-reviewed suppliers of slides. Sets of slides are available, but individual slides can be customized into a set for classroom use. These collections are particularly known for their Asian slides. I have not found a comparable set of sources for slides of African art..

Asian Art Photographic Distribution
Department of the History of Art
University of Michigan
Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1357
(1-313-764-5555)

Museum of Fine Arts
465 Huntington St.
Boston, MA 02115
(1-617-267-9300, ext. 318)

SANDAK
180 Harvard Avenue
Stamford, CT 16902
(1-800-343-2806)

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Student Readings

1. An Introduction to India
2. Highlights of Indian History and The Nations of Modern South Asia
3. The Eternal Ganga: Restoring its Pristine Glory
4. Harappan Seals from Walter Fairservis: The Roots of Ancient India
5. The Aryans and Vedic Beliefs
6. From "The Code of Manu"
7. Five Readings on Caste
    a. What is Caste?
    b. Untouchability
    c. Let Every Caste be Touchable
    d. Proposed job plan highlights complexities of India caste system
    e. Matrimonial Classifieds
8. Rig-Veda X,xc: The Sacrifice of Primal Man; Rig-Veda XXXI,i: Hymn to Agni
9. Excerpts from the Upanishads
10. Karma Pictures
11. India's divine art reveals a god as savant and rogue
12. Bhakti Poetry
13. Basic Hindu Iconography
14. Mudras
15. Shakuntala
16. Savitri
17. The Bhagavad-Gita (excerpt)
18. Jainism: Excerpts
19. The Five Great Vows of the Jain Mendicant
20. The Parable of the Elephant and the Blind Men
21. Asoka's Rock Edicts
22. Ancient Asian Heritages, 600 B.C.(E) to 500 A.D. (C. E.)
23. Basic Buddhist Iconography

An Introduction to India

Buuitjens, Ralph. "Understanding India." Maryknoll November, 1981: 37-43.

Many people in the Western world think of India as an inert and distant (grouping) of people and poverty -- a combination of the exotic and tragic. This misperception, popularized through years of media stereotyping, conceals reality.

In fact, India is a vibrant society with an increasingly vigorous internal dynamic and an increasing influence, directly and indirectly, in the world. Its significance lies not only in its size -- some (850 miillion) Indians are fifteen percent of the planetary population -- but also in the questions raised by the path India has chosen in domestic and foreign policy. This nation is the (world's) largest functioning democracy, with regular and freely contested elections. Thus, it is the test of whether democracy is a suitable system of government for large numbers of relatively poor people....

India's economic policies have also broken new ground. They were the first large-scale test of the modern mixed economy: central government planning with a combination of both private and public ownership of economic enterprises. It is perhaps still too early to evaluate the results. On the one hand, poverty remains (widespread) and unemployment is high. On the other, Indian agriculture has performed much better than either Soviet or Chinese agriculture.*

A further significance of India today comes from the geopolitics of South Asia. Bordering the Indian Ocean into which the Persion Gulf flows, it is a key location in an era of oil logistics. Add the proximity of Russia, Afghanistan, Pakistan, (Iran) and China, and India's stituation becomes critical to the tensions and interactions of current global politics. From this perspective alone, apart from the many human, cultural and othe5 reasons, it (is worthwhile for thinking) people around the world to make efforts to understand this vast and vital nation.

It is possible to say almost anything about India and have it apply to some part of that subcontinent. India is a land of (poverty) and, in some ways, of plenty. It is a nation both powerful and weak, ancient and modern, climatically dramatic in its contrasts. The very term "India" implies a unity which exists more as a tentative political form than as a human and socio-cultural reality. From the intertwining of its complex history with contemporary society, one can (identify) five important features which will perhaps (aid) in understanding modern India.

Ethnic and Linguistic Diversity: The first feature to remember when thinking of

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*In fairness, however, India has more arable land than either country and has fewer people to feed than China.

India is its diversity. It is a country in which there are fifteen official languages, over 300 minor languages, and some 3,000 dialects. Twenty-four languages have more than one million speakers each. The largest spoken language is Hindi, but this is the mother tongue of only about forty percent of the population. Often Indians cannot understand each other and frequently use English as a link or administrative language. But language is not the only diversity. Ethnic differences also (abound). This mosaic is culturally extraordinary. It is a source of divisiveness in a nation where particular loyalties have a deep meaning, both spiritually and physically. Given this diversity, it is remarkable that India has remained and grown, and continues to grow, as one nation.

5000 Year Old History: A second feature is the depth of culture, which contrasts with the newness of the nation in its present form. There has been over 5,000 years of philosophical and cultural development in India going back to early (Indus River) civilization. Since then, Hindu, Buddhist, Christian, Islamic, Sikh and other influences have left deep imprints on society. Every Indian, even the poorest illiterate, can tell stories of myth and history -- a consciousness of a great civilization heritage which is unusually widespread. Yet, there was no (politically unified) India...until the achievement of independence in 1947. Before that there were various fragmented territories. Many of these were absorbed into the British rule with supervision of many areas ruled by traditional princes and local kings of maharajahs. The modern state of India began with independence in 1947 and its development must be understood in the context of trying to impose a national framework on old cultural patterns. The consciousness of the great past and the newness of the present sometimes produces an abrasive reaction.

Land of Minorities: The third feature is that India is a land of minorities. About 80 percent of the population are Hindus. But Hinduism is an amalgam of pluralistic beliefs and forms, often containing conflicting elements. An additional 12 percent are Muslims, deeply aware of their Islamic faith. Hindu, Urdu, Bengali, Marathi, Tamil, Telegu, Punjabi and other languages create minorities of their own. Tribal and neo-aboriginal peoples number (in the millions). No contestant for political office can be successful without an awareness of these constituencies. And this, in turn, conditions both domestic and foreign policy.

The Future Depends on the Meshing of Rural and Urban Societies: A fourth feature of modern India is that, broadly speaking, its future depends on the interaction between two worlds: the cities of India, where some 20 percent of the population live, and rural India, where more than 500,000 villages contain the rest of the population. Urban India is the India of modern industry, national politics and foreign policy, government planning, the national media, the major universities, business, the armed forces, science and technology. Its best products are frequently as good as the best in the world, its orientation is cosmopolitan. Rural India is the India of age-old patterns where tradition is the principal dynamic of society, where outsiders come and go but life continues, often without much change. When the two Indias mesh effectively, India is a success -- as in the expansion of education, the reduction of illiteracy, the extension of the average lifespan, the introduction of some basic health care, the sustenance of a democratic political system. When they do not connect effectively, India is in trouble -- as with population control and unemployment. For the nation to realize its considerable potential, the linkage between those two Indias has to be expanded and strengthened.

Mixing of Spirituality and Modernity: The fifth and final feature (to) remember is that poverty, spirituality, and modernity mix and coexist in India, without the paradoxical implications which a Western perspective suggests. It is the essence of Indian spirituality which enables even the most deprived to endure poverty, and it is modernity which provides the prospect of improvement. It is this spirit, a composite of many small individual visions and inspirations, which characterizes modern India and offers the best hope for the nation and its people.

Highlights of Indian History

I. Ancient India -- 3000-1500 B.C.E.

circa 2500 B.C.E.	Advanced civilization developed in the Indus River Valley.
circa 1500 B.C.E	Successive waves of Aryans invade northern India.

II. Hindu period -- 1500 B.C.E.-1200 C.E.

598-524 B.C.E.	Life of Mahavira firmly establishes Jainism.
563-483 B.C.E.	Life of Buddha.
326 B.C.E.	Alexander the Great invades northern India.
322 B.C.E.	Chandragupta establishes the Mauryan Empire.
273-232 B.C.E.	Reign of Ashoka; near unification of subcontinent, religious and racial toleration, spread Buddhism to E. and SE Asia.
320-550 C.E.	"Golden Age" of Gupta India.
647-1200	Rise of Hindu princely states.

III. Muslim period -- 1200-1763

712	Muslim Arabs conquerSind province in NW India.
1000-1192	Periodic Muslim military incursions.
1206-1526	Delhi Sultanate rules most of northern India.
1221	Short-lived Mongol invasion by Genghis Khan.
1398	Short-lived Mongol invasion by Timur (Tamerlane).
1498	Arrival of the Portuguese; da Gama reaches India by sea.
1519-1526	Invasion by the Mughals (Mongols) under Babur.
1526-1857	Mughal Empire rules most of the subcontinent.
1526-1658	Mughal "Golden Age".
1613	English (British) East India Co. (BEIC) establishes first trading post at Surat on NW coast.
1658-1707	Reign of Aurangzeb; rel. intolerance; decline of the Empire.

IV. British period -- 1763-1947

1744-1763	Anglo-French struggle for power in India (as elsewhere).
1757	Clive defeats the French at Plassey.
1772-1857	BEIC gains control over most of India.
1857	Indian War for Independence/Sepoy Mutiny.
1858	BEIC is abolished, Great Britain takes over in India.
1885	All-India National Congress (Hindu-dominated) is formed.
1906	Muslim League is formed.
1919	Amritsar Massacre; Gandhi proclaims passive resistance movement to gain Indian self-rule (Swaraj).
1940	"Two India" proposal made by the Muslim League.
1947	India wins independence; partition along religious lines leads to the founding of India (Bharat) and a two-part Pakistan.

The Nations of Modern South Asia

1. Off the southern coast of India is the island nation of Sri Lanka, shaped like a large teardrop. Tamil Indians from the Madras area of India came to Sri Lanka to work on the large British tea and rubber plantations. Today the Tamils comprise almost one third of Sri Lanka's population. The capital of the nation is **Colombo**.

2. Slightly south and directly west of Sri Lanka are the Maldives Islands. The Maldives consist of approximately one hundred coral isles. Agriculture and tourism are the primary industries of the country. The Maldives won their independence from Great Britain in 1965. There is a U.S. air and naval installation on Diego Garcia, one of the islands. The capital of the Maldives is **Male**.

3. Bangladesh shares a border with India. Located to India's northeast, Bangladesh is a low-lying plain in the Ganges and Brahmaputra delta. The seas of the Bay of Bengal frequently flood the Bangladesh coastal area during the late-summer typhoon season. The capital of Bangladesh is **Dacca**.

4. Separated from Bangladesh by a narrow strip of Indian territory, Bhutan is a small Buddhist kingdom. Currently an Indian protectorate, Bhutan occupies a strategic position serving as a barrier between India and China. The capital of Bhutan is **Thimpu**.

5. Nepal is the only Hindu kingdom in the world. Nepal is located high in the Himalaya mountains and is bordered to the south and east and partly to the west by India and by The People's Republic of China to the north. Mt. Everest, the world's highest mountain (above sea level) is in Nepal. **Katmandu** is the capital of the country.

6. Until 1947 the entire land area of Pakistan was a part of British India. After Indian independence, India was divided into East and West Pakistan. In 1971 East Pakistan rebelled against West Pakistani domination and created the independent country of Bangladesh. Afghanistan borders the northern section of Pakistan. The entire eastern border of Pakistan is flanked by India. India's most northern state, Kashmir and Jammu, is an area held in dispute between Pakistan and India. The capital of Pakistan is **Islamabad**.

7. India is by population the second largest country in the world and by land area the seventh largest in the world. Since independence in 1947, the Indian economy has grown at a steady rate. The capital of India is **New Delhi**.

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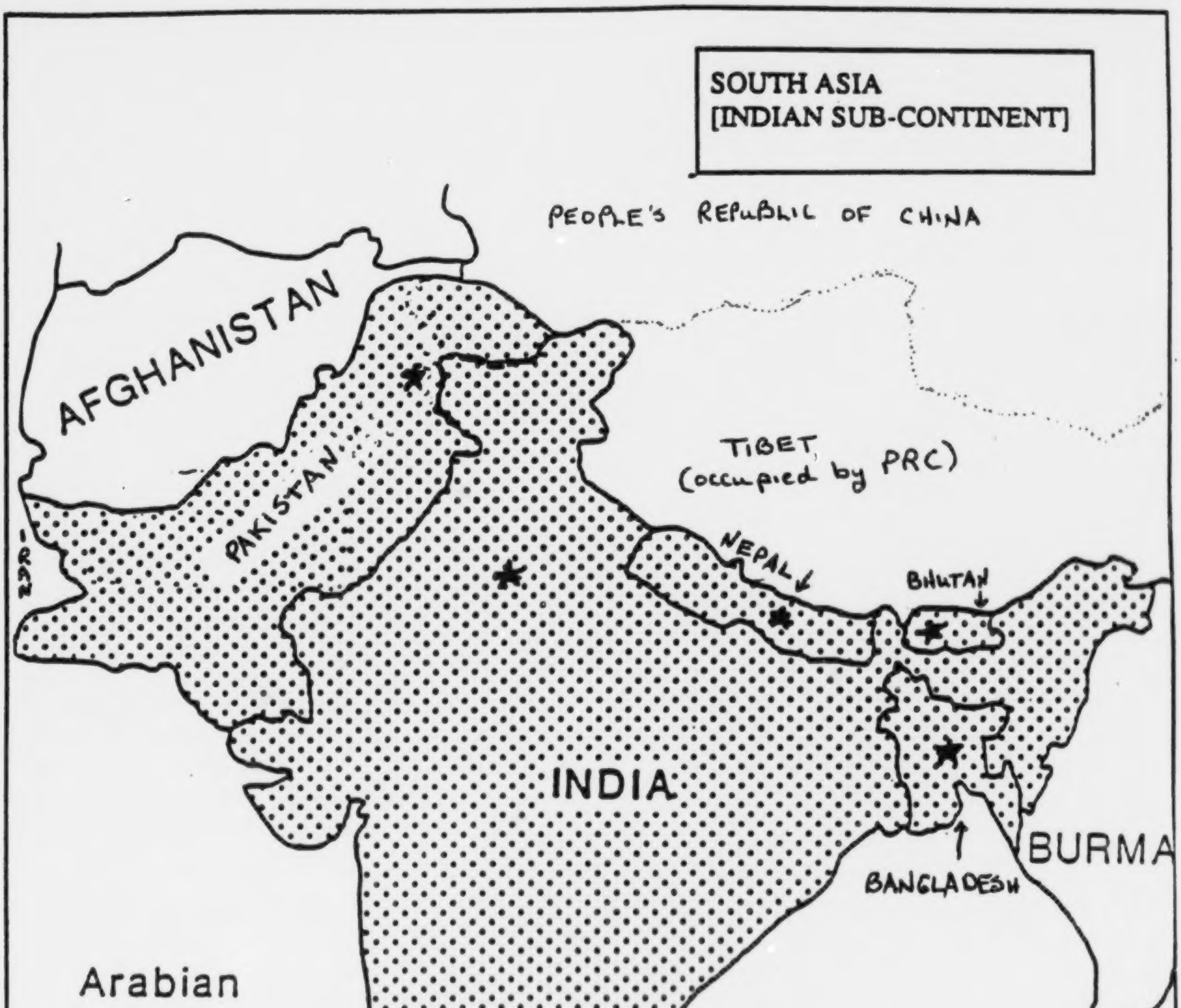

SOUTH ASIA
[INDIAN SUB-CONTINENT]

PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA
AFGHANISTAN
PAKISTAN
IRAN
TIBET
(occupied by PRC)
NEPAL
BHUTAN
INDIA
BURMA
BANGLADESH
Arabian Sea
Bay of Bengal
SRI LANKA
Indian
Ocean
MALDIVES

★ = capital city

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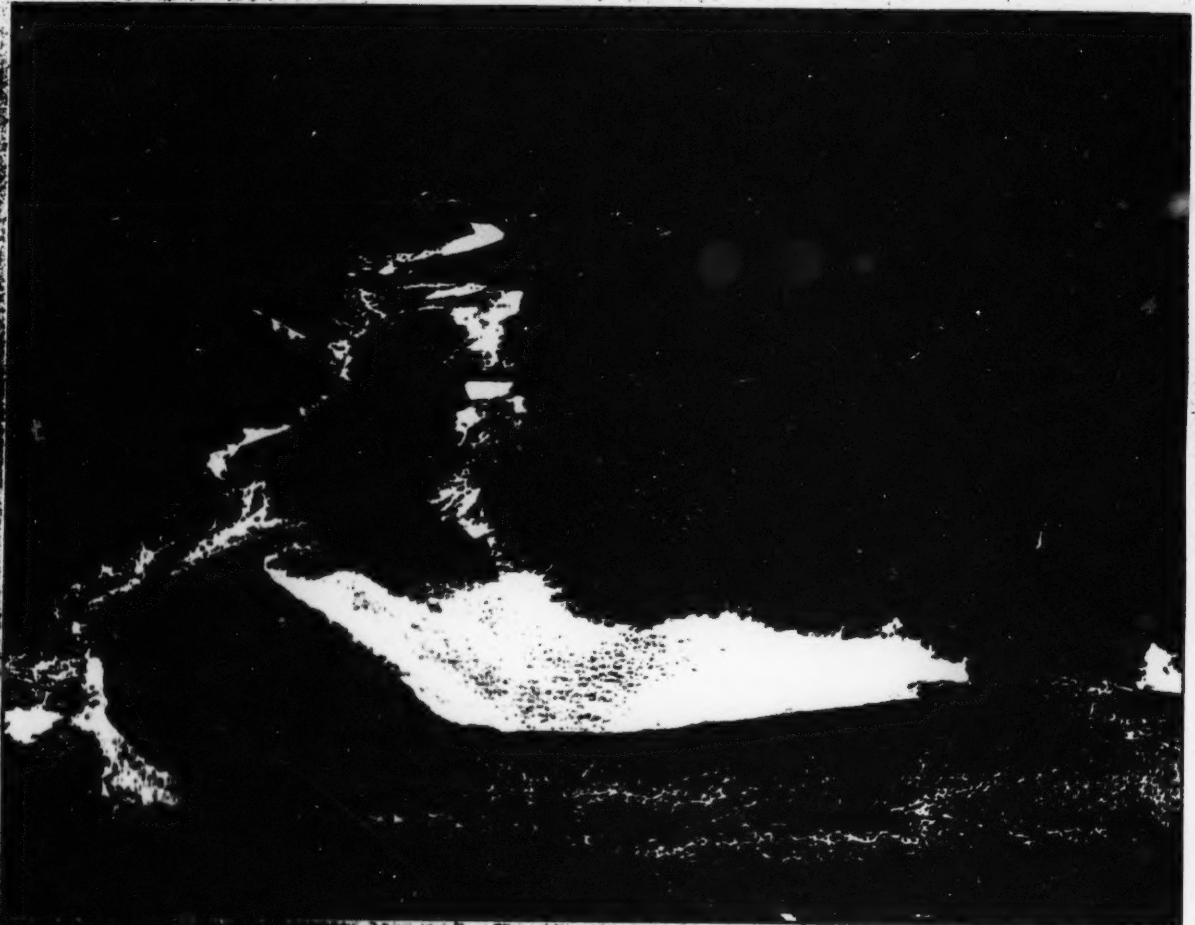

THE ETERNAL GANGA

RESTORING ITS PRISTINE GLORY

Text: Pran Nath Luthra

Photographs: Ashok Dilwali

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To an Indian, the river Ganga is not a mere inert mass of moving water: it is the perennial source of sustenance, both material and spiritual. No other river in the world has a history as rich in myths and legends as the Ganga, and no other river anywhere has become so inextricably integrated with the terrestrial, cultural and religious life of a whole nation.

The origin and meaning of the word "Ganga is wrapped in mystery. According to one authority, the word 'Ganga" etymologically signifies that which leads you to *Brahman*, the Ultimate Reality. In other words, she liberates people from the magic spell which the world of sensual experiences casts on them. Etymologists differ over whether "Ganga' is a Sanskrit word. Some hold it is derived from the Tibetan "Tsong" which means "flowing water". The Nobel Laureate poet Rabindra Nath Tagore envisioned the Himalayas as a serene and serious sage in deep meditation, holding on his chest (or the heartland of India), a rosary of a river, namely the Ganga. She is reckoned as divinity in the form of water. To touch it, to drink it, to bathe in it when alive, to be washed in it when dead, is to be cleansed within and without for life and beyond.

Ganga evokes a mixture of feelings in the mind of its devotees. Feelings of reverence emerge because of her divine origin for which she is reckoned as a sustaining mother. Her water is "amrit" or nectar that quenches the people's thirst and irrigates the vast expanse of agricultural crops. She is the cradle of our civilisation and culture because ancient settlements and towns sprang up upon her banks as far back as the Aryan kingdoms before 500 B.C. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru observed that "the story of the Ganga, from her source to the sea, from old times to the new, is the story of India's civilisation and culture."

In his will, he poetically epitomised the binding national symbol of the Ganga in the following words: "The Ganga, especially, is the river of India, beloved of her people, round which are interwined her racial memories, her hopes and fears, her victories and her defeats. She has been a symbol of India's age-long culture and civilisation, ever-changing, ever-flowing and yet ever the same Ganga". No wonder then that the mendicant, the merchant, the prince, the preceptor and the conqueror have, over the ages, been drawn to the Ganga. And so it was in recent history when the Danes, the Dutch, the French, and the British who coveted the riches of the east, sailed up the Ganga, the principal focus and core of the sub-continent.

The Ganga is one of the ten mighty rivers of the world. It meanders across the length and breadth of India for some 2525 miles covering the entire area north of the Vindhayas till she merges wth the ocean in the Bay of Bengal. Its origin lies 4000 metres above the sea level in the Western Himalayas, to the north of Uttar Pradesh amidst a deep icy cavern resembling the mouth of a cow. This is known as *Gaumukh* which attracts a large number of pilgrims. The Ganga basin which spreads across eight states, sustains some 37 per cent of India's population. The Ganga basin is extensively cultivated and forms 47 per cent of the total irrigated area in the country.

The Ganga has been a major channel of communication since ancient times. During the British rule, one of the favourite pastimes of the Europeans was to cruise along the Ganga to beat off the unbearable heat. The Viceroy, Lord Wellesley, had a special boat which was "richly ornamented with green and gold and it could carry 20 people with ease".

Today, the Ganga is in trouble;

Pilgrims bathing in the Ganga at Hardwar

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it is polluted by three main pollutants: the industrial effluents; the domestic waste and sewage and lastly, poisonous garbage, animal carcasses and the run-off of chemical fertilisers and pesticides from the agricultural fields surrounding the river. The river has been known to possess self-purifying capacity due to the natural chemicals inherent in its water. But the excessive volume of man-made polutants consigned into the Ganga each day has proved to be beyond its capacity. Besides, the river has silted and become shallow because the dense forest cover on its watershed is vanishing with each passing day. Even so, the Ganga has not lost an iota of her sanctity deeply set in the minds of her countless worshippers. The challenge before the country today is to balance city growth with environment so that the river, which gave rise to India's cities and its civilisation, is not ravaged by the wastes thrown into it.

In 1984, a scientific assessment was made of its pollution problem. In 1985, the Government of India's Environment Ministry set up the Central Ganga Authority as a separate wing. Its charter was to undertake a project to restore the pristine purity of the Ganga. On 14 June 1986, the then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi launched the Ganga Action Plan at Varanasi and resolutely affirmed that: "We shall see that the waters of the Ganga become clean again."

India is one of the few countries in the world that has undertaken such a big and daunting project for the cleansing of Ganga river. The project has evoked keen interest and enthusiasm of both the people and the Government. The primary feature of the Ganga Action Plan (GAP) is to divert the sewage now contaminating the river to alternative locations for appropriate treatment and its conversion into an energy asset. For instance, the treated sewage is utilised for aquaculture or to feed fish ponds. It also becomes a resource for generating bio-electricity and for irrigation purposes. A number of schemes have been formulated under the GAP to reduce the pollution in the Ganga by 75 per cent. Overall, the schemes take an integrated view of the premier river system of India.

The main thrust of the GAP is to treat the sewage from 25 towns situated along the river - six in Uttar Pradesh, four in Bihar and fifteen in West Bengal and then to monitor and control the situation under the prevailing environmental laws. A total of 261 schemes to cover the states of Uttar Pradesh (106), Bihar (45) and West Bengal (110) are at a cost about Rs 4,500 million were to be completed in1994.

The management has, in the course of the implementation of GAP, developed certain innovative technologies. One of them is the use of turtles as scavengers to maintain the cleanliness of the river. Another consists of installing Automatic Water Quality Monitoring Stations sited at nine locations to monitor the river water quality on a continuous basis. Under the Indo-Dutch cooperation programme, a new digester process called the Upflow Anaerbic Sludge Blanket has been used for the first time for sewage treatment. The treated sewage is being utilised for agro-forestry.

Public participation too is essential to promote the success of such a gigantic plan. A number of schemes have consequently been devised to enlist people's involvement. School children have also been associated with the monitoring of the river water quality through specially designed testing kits. The response of the people has been substantial and spontaneous because of the high esteem in which the Ganga is held by them.

The Ganga in its initial course and (right) muddied at Varanasi

Another aspect of the GAP has been the restoration of the Ganga's bio-diversity. The mapping of the biological wealth has been carried out and a base-line paper has been prepared showing 1828 species of biota of the Ganga. This would contribute in the seasonal development of the aquatic wealth of the river and also help in planning a judicious programme for exploitation of the reverine resources. Furthermore, certian sanctuaries have been carved out to ban some varieties of fishing nets and there has been revision of the legislation on fisheries.

The encourging results

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achieved in the implementation of the GAP have led to the replication of this model in other polluted rivers in the country. Thus a National River Action Plan has emerged to restore the water quality of twelve other major rivers in the country which include the Cauveri, Krishna, Sabarmati, Sutlej, Narmada etc.

Hopefully, this sacred river, the lifeline of India, will soon regain its pristine purity. ■

The author is noted freelance writer.

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Walter Fairservis: The Roots of Ancient India

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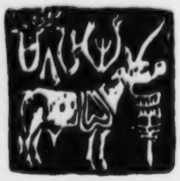

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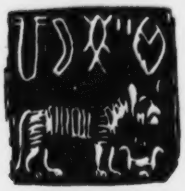

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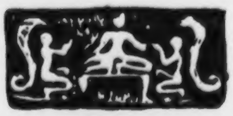

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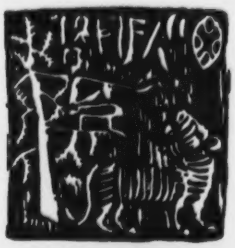

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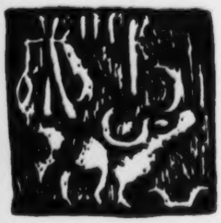

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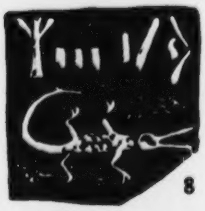

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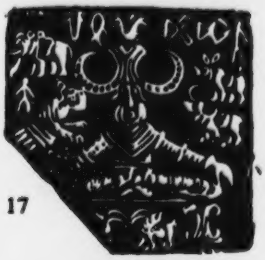

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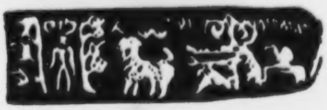

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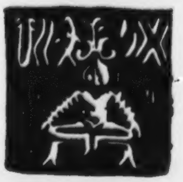

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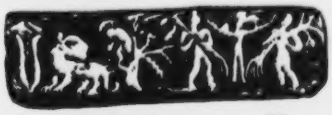

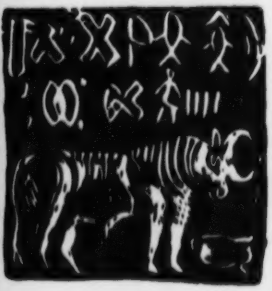

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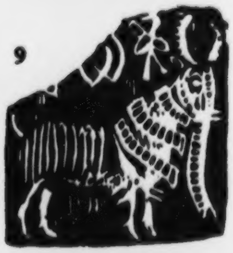

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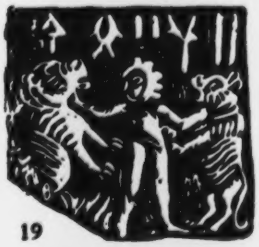

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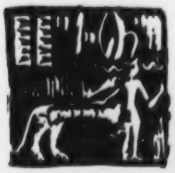

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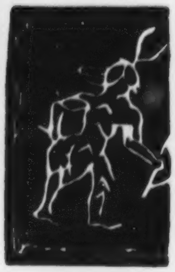

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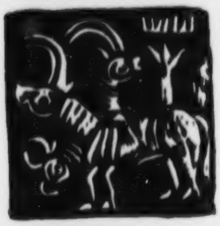

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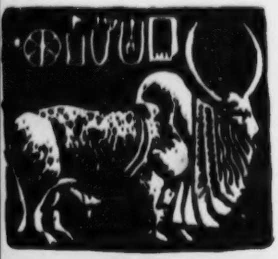

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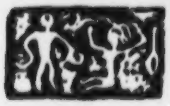

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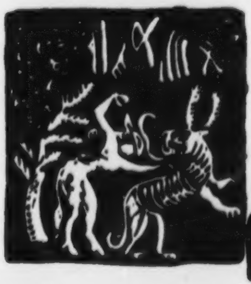

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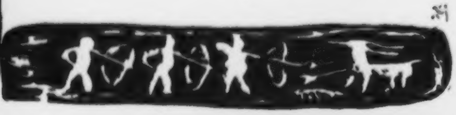

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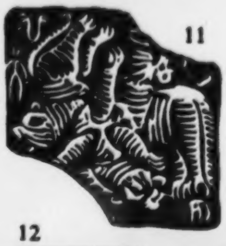

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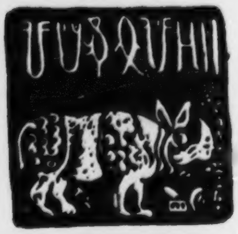

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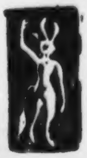

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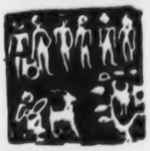

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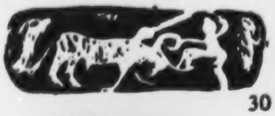

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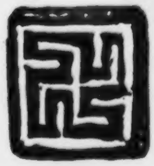

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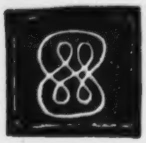

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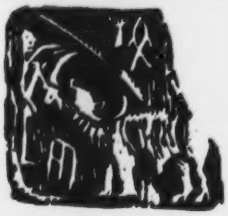

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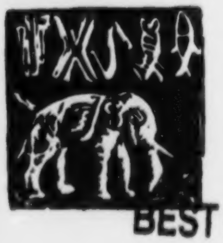

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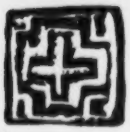

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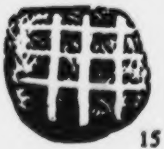

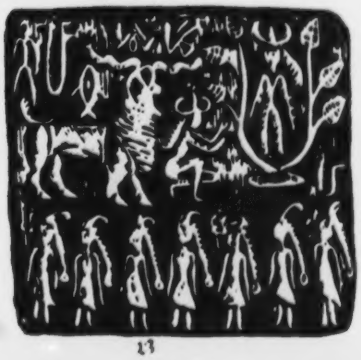
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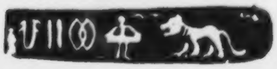

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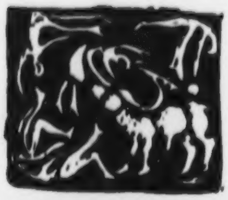

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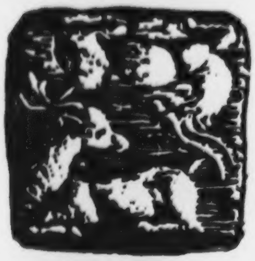

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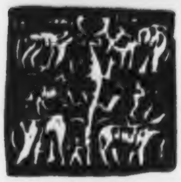

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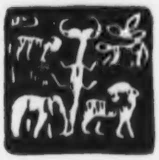

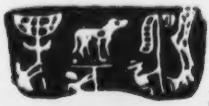

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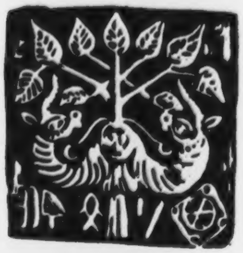

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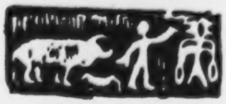

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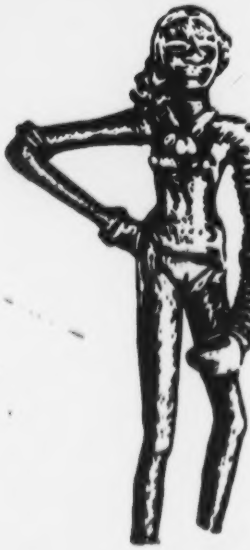

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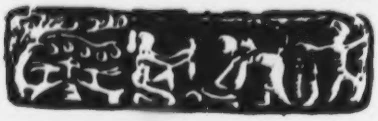

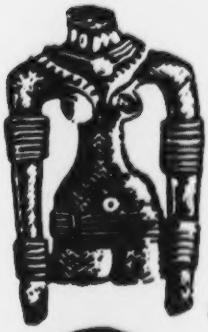

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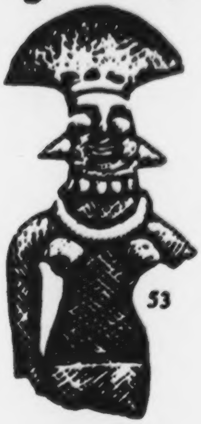

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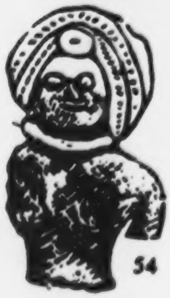

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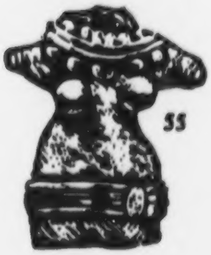

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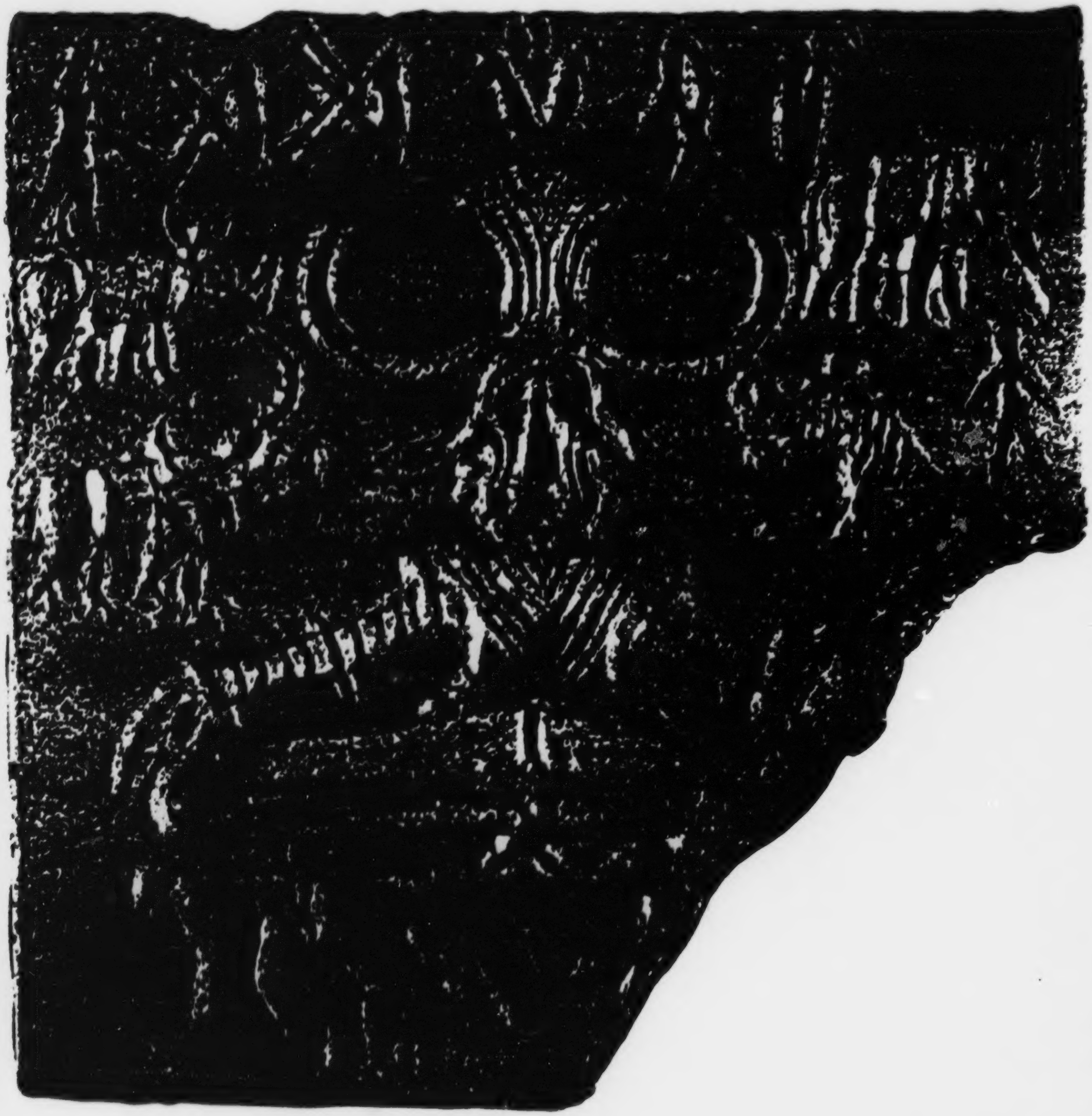

Harappa's "Lord of the Beasts"
(enlarged)

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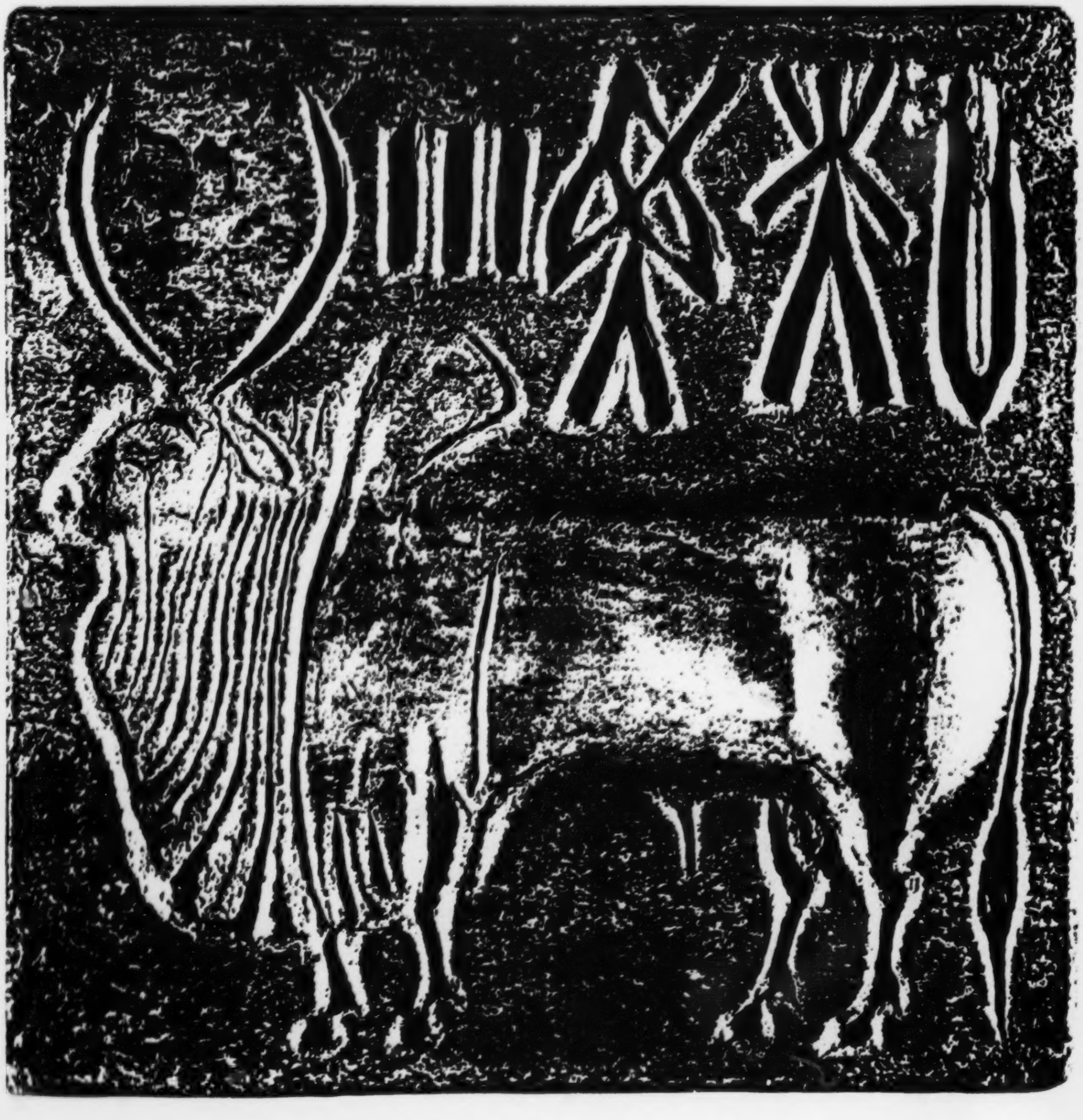

A Harappan Seal showing a Brahman Bull and an Inscription (enlarged)

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The Aryans and Vedic Beliefs

The culture of historic India is one of the oldest and most constant that has ever existed on Earth. In 2,500 B.C., merchants from India's first civilization sailed the Arabian Sea, trading with such ancient and distant Mesopotamian cities as Agades and Ur. By the time Greece entered its Golden Age in the fifth century B.C., the Rig Veda, the foundation of Hindu philosophical thought, was nearly a thousand years old. Despite its great antiquity, however, India's culture remained intact and as vibrant as ever when the sun set on the great British Empire. Hinduism is still practiced by 500 million people or more.

Geographically, India is an arrow-shaped peninsula located on the southern side of the Asian continent. It is large, with an area of over a million square miles. On the north, it is bordered by high, wall-like mountain ranges on all sides: the Hindu Kush on the northwest, the Karakoram on the north, and the Himalayas on the northeast. Its pointed tip is protected by the Arabian Sea on the west and the Bay of Bengal on the east. It's climate ranges from temperate in the north and arctic in the mountain ranges to tropical in the south. India has a wide variety of terrain: mountains reaching 25,000 feet in altitude, tropical jungles, barren deserts, and fertile tablelands, river valleys, and coastal plains. In the spring, much of the land is baked by a fiery, merciless sun, and in the summer it is flooded by unending monsoon rains.

Around 4,000 B.C., the first Indians to inhabit this wild land gave up the nomadic life of hunters and gatherers. On the banks of rivers close to the mighty Indus, they founded many small farming villages. By 2,500 B.C., they had created the Harappan Culture, India's first civilization. The Harappan Culture had two important cities, Harappa and Mohenjo Daro, each a masterpiece of urban planning. They also had dozens of smaller farming and fishing villages scattered over an area of 200,000 square miles. At the port of Lothal was a brick shipyard over 700 feet long, capable of loading merchant ships at both high and low tides.

About 1,500 B.C., the Harappan Culture began to suffer a decline, probably due to working their land until it was barren, the resultant increase in monsoon flooding, and perhaps even the geology of the region, which, over the course of a thousand years, was slowly moving their sea and fishing ports away from the sea.

The Aryans

Whatever the reason for the decline of the Harappan Culture, the death blow came when Aryan tribes began filtering through the Khyber, Bolan, and other passes ("ghats") of the Hindu Kush. Coming from the steppes of Central Asia, these fierce nomads invaded and settled in Asia Minor, Persia, and India.

Armed with swift, horse-drawn chariots, the Aryan tribes quickly captured and destroyed Harappa and the northern cities, ravaging everything in their path. The Aryans were wandering herdsmen who spent only slightly less effort on intertribal warfare than they did on intercultural feuds. Cows and bulls, from which came their food and clothing, were the measure of their wealth. In their hands, the complex urban culture of Harappa and Mohenjo Daro faded into oblivion, along with its writing, craftsmanship, art, and architecture.

The Aryans did leave one artifact that was to prove more important to India than all of the cities and art works of the Harappas. The Aryan priests built up an exhaustive record of their religious beliefs and practices. Composed in a complex poetic style passed along by memory and recitation for a thousand ages, these hymns were compiled in four great books called the Vedas. This period in Indian history, from 1,500 B.C. to 500 B.C., is called the Vedic Age. It was during this period that the fundamental principles of Hinduism, principles that endure to this day, were laid down.

During the Vedic Age, the lifestyles of the Aryans themselves underwent many changes. As they pushed south, fighting each other and conquering the non-Aryan natives of India, the Aryans began to trade their nomadic ways for agricultural lifestyles. The shift to a more stable economic base did little to change their essential character, however. They remained a fearless people of enormous pride, utterly convinced of their own racial and social superiority over those they conquered. The Aryans forced their conquered victims to live in clusters outside their villages, treated them with nothing but contempt and scorn, and banned them from participating in Aryan religious rites.

The principle of segregation also extended to the Aryans themselves, however. They divided their citizens into classes. At the top of the order were the hereditary nobles, from whom the raja (chief) was chosen. The priests, who were responsible for religious teaching and observances, came next and third were the ordinary tribesmen. Below all of these classes, of course, were the conquered peoples.

As the Aryan agricultural communities became more stable and victor and vanquished fused, the Aryan class system underwent many changes. The chiefs became hereditary, power-hungry kings, and their communities became kingdoms of varying size and power. The classes became subdivided and even more rigid, and moving from one class to another became even more difficult.

The greatest change came in the relationship of the priestly class to the nobles. By giving a new meaning to religious ritual, the priests managed to raise themselves in status even above the kings. Over the years, the priests had developed enormously complex rituals out of the ceremonies of the Rig Veda (the first Veda). As the Aryan kingdoms were taking shape, they began to teach that if a ritual were performed incorrectly, the cosmic order (called "rita") would be upset and catastrophe would follow. Of course, the priests were the only ones that could perform the rituals properly. Therefore, they became exalted even above the kings.

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Ward, James M. and Troy Denning. Legends and Lore. Lake Geneva, WI: Random House, 1991.

By the close of the Vedic Age, the Aryans had transformed themselves from simple nomads into the caretakers of a vast and complex civilization. Their rajas were no longer tribal leaders, they were hereditary kings commanding vast areas throughout India. Their family life was based upon religious concepts of divinely ordained, hereditary classes, with the brahmins (priests) at the top, followed by the kshatriya (kings and warriors), vaishyas (merchants, artisans, etc.), and finally the shudras (serfs). Their everyday actions were ruled by a multitude of proscriptions and restrictions. Religion had become a complex series of painstaking rites based upon concepts beyond the comprehension of common people, and priests were the most powerful members of the communities.

Late Vedic Beliefs

The power of the Vedic priests lay in their intellectual prowess, so it should come as no surprise that they developed a long tradition of philosophical compositions regarding the Vedas. One of the most important of these, the Upanishads, contained many of the themes that inspired the originators of Buddhism, Jainism, and many other less popular religions. Since *Legends & Lore* is concerned primarily with the Vedic pantheon and its later mythology, these religions will not be discussed—except to note that their origins can be found in the concepts developed toward the end of the Vedic Age.

In addition to planting the seeds of Buddhism and Jainism, the Upanishads provided the foundation of the most popular religion in India to this day, Hinduism.

The transition between the beliefs of the late Vedic Age and those of early Hinduism is so smooth and gradual that it is impossible to describe one without touching on the other. Many of the concepts discussed below will unavoidably have an Hinduistic echo to them.

In searching for the meaning of life and the fundamental truth of the universe, the Upanishads accepted the many gods of the Vedic pantheon. But they also sought to unify the multiplicity of the world. They achieved this by postulating the existence of the Brahman, a single world spirit that enfolded all of existence. The importance of this concept to Indian culture cannot be underestimated, for it allowed the Vedic priests to exert their influence over the worshipers of (literally) millions of different gods. Instead of converting those who worshiped deities different than their own, the priests simply sanctioned the worship of these diverse gods as different aspects of the one truth, the Brahman.

Brahman cannot be defined exactly. It is the Divine essence which is hidden in all beings, and of which all beings are a part. Everything that exists—the gods, men, animals, plants, even rocks—is simply a manifestation of the Brahman. The spirit that animates each person (and god, animal, plant, etc.) is an imperceptible part of the Brahman called the "Atman."

The only way for an individual to attain a state of bliss, according to this mode of thought, is to experience the essential unity between the Atman and the Brahman. Until an individual succeeds in doing this, he is doomed to be reborn again and again. Thus, reincarnation is one of the fundamental concepts of ancient Indian thought.

The nature of the individual's reincarnation depends upon the second fundamental concept: "karma". Simply stated, karma is a form of cause and effect. It postulates that a good result will follow a good action, and a bad result will follow a bad action. Those leading a good life will be rewarded by a better position in their next reincarnation. Those leading a bad life will be punished by receiving a lower position (perhaps even as an animal) when they are reborn. Each man's position in life is a direct and unavoidable consequence of his actions in his last life. Note that this doctrine reinforces the rigid class structure adopted in the late Vedic Age.

Dharma, the third basic concept of ancient Indian thought, helps a person achieve good karma during his lifetime. Dharma is the duty to which a man is bound by his station in life. If he does as his dharma dictates, performing his duties according to his station in life, then his karma in the next life will be good. If he fails to follow his dharma, then he might find himself reincarnated as a beggar, slave, or worse.

Another important concept to the Vedic priests ("Brahmins") is their concept of time. In the western view, time is a steady, linear progression. Once an event has occurred, it is in the "past" and will not reappear in the "future." To the Vedic mind, however, time is cyclical. Everything that has happened in the past will happen again, and it is impossible for anything to happen that has never happened before. They view time as a revolving circle that binds together everything in the universe, including the gods. Therefore, when they perform a ritual, they are mystically repeating some event crucial to the continuation of the universe, such as its death and rebirth.

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From "The Code of Manu"
Sources of Indian Tradition. Ainslie T. Embree, ed. New York: Columbia University Press, 1988.

1.87-91: On Varna-Dharma

For the sake of the preservation of this entire creation, the Exceedingly Resplendent One assigned separate duties to the classes which had sprung from his mouth, arms, thighs, and feet.

Teaching, studying, performing sacrificial rites, so too making others perform sacrificial rites, and giving away and receiving gifts -- these he assigned to the brahmins.

Protection of the people, giving away of wealth, performance of sacrificial rites, study, and nonattachment to sensual pleasures -- these are, in short, the duties of kshatriya.

Tending of cattle, giving away of wealth, performance of sacrificial rites, study, trade and commerce, usury, and agriculture -- these are the occupations of a vaishya.

The Lord has prescribed only one occupation for a shudra, namely, service without malice of even these other three classes.

3.55-57; 9.3, 4, 6, 7, 11, 26: On The Position of Women

Women must be honored and adorned by their fathers, brothers, husbands, and brothers-in-law who desire great good fortune.

Where women, verily, are honored, there the gods rejoice; where, however, they are not honored, there all sacred rites prove fruitless.

Where the female relations live in grief -- that family soon perishes completely; where, however, they do not suffer from any grievance -- that family always prospers....

Her father protects her in childhood, her husband protects her in youth, her sons protect her in old age -- a woman does not deserve independence.

The father who does not give away his daughter in marriage at the proper time is censurable; censurable is the husband who does not approach his wife in due season; and after the husband is dead, the son, verily, is censurable, who does not protect his mother.

Regarding this as the highest dharma of all four classes, husbands, though weak, must strive to protect their wives.

His own offspring, character, family, self, and dharma does one protect when he protects his wife scrupulously.

The husband should engage his wife in the collection and expenditure of his wealth, in cleanliness, in dharma, in cooking food for the family, and in looking after the necessities of the household....

Women destined to bear children, enjoying great food fortune, deserving of worship, the resplendent lights of homes on the one hand and divinities of good luck who reside in the houses on the other -- between these there is no difference....

What Is Caste?

§*Editors' Introduction:* If you were to ask Ved Mehta's tailor, "What is your caste?" he would probably answer, "I am a tailor." Occupation is one definition of caste in India, but it is not the only one.

In Indian society there are four large classes, called *varnas*, that date back to 1,000 B.C.: Brahmin (priest), Kshatriya (ruler), Vaishya (businessman), and Shudra (worker). Each *varna* had its *dharma*. The Laws of Manu, written at least two hundred years before Christ, describe these four groups as follows:

> For the sake of prosperity of the worlds, he created the Brahmin, the Kshatriya, the Vaishya, and the Shudra . . .
>
> To Brahmins he assigned teaching and studying [the *Veda*], sacrificing for their own benefit and for others, giving and accepting [of alms].
>
> The Kshatriya he commanded to protect the people, to bestow gifts, to offer sacrifices, to study [the *Veda*], and to abstain from attaching himself to sensual pleasures.
>
> The Vaishya to tend cattle, to bestow gifts, to offer sacrifices, to study [the *Veda*], to trade, to lend money, and to cultivate land.
>
> One occupation only the lord prescribed to the Shudra, to serve meekly even these three [other] castes.*

But these categories have always been more theoretical than real.

---

* Ainslie Embree, *The Hindu Tradition* (New York: The Modern Library, 1966), pp. 79–80.

By Donald J. Johnson.

A Brahmin blows on his sacred conch in preparation for reading from the Ramayana. (Donald and Jean Johnson)

A land recorder (Kshatriya) uses a charpoy *(cot) as his office.* (Donald and Jean Johnson)

An oil presser (Shudra) in a south Indian village. (Donald and Jean Johnson)

India, from earliest times, has been divided into many small communities, known as *jati*. Today there are over three thousand *jati* in India. Each is distinct because it does not exchange food or intermarry with any other *jati*. But knowing these facts does not fully explain how the caste system functions in Indian society. To understand the complexity of the caste system, consider the following imaginary conversation between an American teacher and an Indian businessman. Does caste seem to be a problem to the Indian? What is caste?

American: I appreciate your willingness to explain caste to me. Most Indians tell me I couldn't possibly understand it and can only see caste as a problem. But I want to understand. Is it true that caste began when the light-skinned Aryans came to India and subdued the darker-skinned Dravidians?

Indian: Yes and no.

American: Do you mean yes or no?

Indian: I mean yes *and* no. The early Brahmins were probably Aryans, but many of the very strict Brahmins are in South India, and they are darker than some of the very low-caste people.

American: Then caste is not based on color?

Indian: That's right. Some high castes are dark, some are light. Low castes also are both dark and light.

American: Then race doesn't explain caste. What about rich and poor? Surely the high-caste Brahmins are richer than the low-caste workers—Shudra.

Indian: Again, yes and no. Many members of high castes are also well-born, with more education and better jobs, and would be considered "upper class" in your sense. Yet there are many poor Brahmins and rich Shudras. Apu's family in the movie "Pather Panchali" were very poor Brahmins. The night watchman in that office over there is Brahmin. But take the Nadars in South Indian. They were untouchables but are now among the most successful businessmen in the area.

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AMERICAN: So caste isn't race or class. Would you agree that it is based on occupation?

INDIAN: You can guess my answer: yes and no. Occupation is an important feature of caste. Many names are occupational, like your Mr. Potter, Mr. Carpenter, Mr. Smith, Mr. Weaver, Mr. Taylor. Most of our craft groups are also caste groups. Sons follow their fathers' occupations, and daughters marry boys who do the same work as their fathers.

But there are also exceptions. Most Brahmins are not priests. There are villages in North India where most of the farmers are Brahmins. The army is made up of hundreds of castes, and most of them are not from the Kshatriya or warrior group. In Kerela, the Nairs are the dominant caste, and they are not even in the top three *varnas*. Some of India's most important saints came from non-Brahmin castes. Gandhi became a saint, but he was of a commercial caste, and his name means grocer. It's like your John Smith who was a colonizer in America. Did he ever work as a blacksmith? So caste is not based just on occupation.

AMERICAN: It's easier to say what caste isn't than what it is. How about ethnic loyalty? Is caste membership like belonging to a Polish-American or an Italian-American group?

INDIAN: Yes and no. India does have thousands of different ethnic groups, many of which migrated here through the more than 4,000 years of Indian history. You probably know the Aryans, Muslims, and British. But there were also the Bactrians, the Kushans, the Huns, the Parsees, the Afghans, and hundreds of others. Many groups have different physical appearances and claim different histories. How did the Coorgs of South India come here? The Chitpavan Brahmins of Maharastra have blue eyes. Did they come from the Middle East? Are the Jats of North India descendants of the white Huns? One of our great anthropologists, Professor Karve, claimed that all caste members were blood-related. She explained caste as an expanded kinship system.

AMERICAN: I give up. Let's say we just don't know why caste groups formed, how they came about, or why.

INDIAN: At last you've said something I can agree with.

AMERICAN: Can we at least learn how many castes there are in India?

INDIAN: That depends on whether you mean the large groupings like Brahmins, Jat, Nairs, etc., or the thousands of so-called subcastes.

AMERICAN: Don't tell me you can't answer this either. How many subcastes?

INDIAN: No one has ever counted them, but there are several thousand. There are 550 subcastes of untouchables alone. In the Delhi area, there are hundreds of Brahmin castes.

AMERICAN: This is really getting complicated. Let's forget numbers. Can you tell me how a caste acts—any caste?

INDIAN: Well, behavior, rituals, and taboos are different for each one. I'm a member of the Srivastava community.

AMERICAN: How does that affect your life?

INDIAN: Well, in spite of the fact I live in Delhi, my caste is always a part of my life. My wife, naturally, is a Srivastava. She comes from a family that has known my family for more years than we can remember. Because she is a Srivastava, she knows the food I like, the religious rituals I am used to, she tells our children stories from the *Ramayana*, the same ones I was told as a child. In a thousand unconscious ways, her behavior will echo mine because we are members of the same caste. Marriage almost always takes place within one caste for these reasons. Sometimes women marry into a higher caste, but men hardly ever.

Eating is another thing. My mother, sixty years old now, will not take food from a lower caste. My partner's a Brahmin. In his home I do not ask for food, although we eat in restaurants together. Perhaps this practice came about as a protection from disease. Maybe it's a way to preserve one's culture. You have that in America, don't you? Russian-Americans like their Borscht; Italians prefer their spaghetti; not everyone likes soul food.

Then there's the matter of social life. Most of us prefer to be with members of our own group because we have more in common. We share a history, a tradition; we laugh at the same jokes. Don't you feel more at home with other northern Europeans like yourself? And don't answer by telling me, "Some of my best friends are black."

Then there's the loyalty. If I'm in trouble I can always count on my family and my community. No matter where I travel in India, I know caste members will accept me. Even when I travel to your country, another Srivastava will take me in. It's good to know you are never alone. Being part of a community really matters; it gives meaning to life, although the community also imposes restrictions on its own members.

AMERICAN: How can you tell the difference between a high caste and a low one?

INDIAN: It has to do with ritual purity. A Kshatriya king may be powerful and a Vaishya trader may be rich, but their ritual status is lower than that of the poorest Brahmin.

AMERICAN: Well, either some castes are higher than others or they aren't.

INDIAN: Why must you Americans always insist on thing's being either one way or another? Things aren't always black or white.

AMERICAN: We'll discuss philosophy another time. Now we're discussing sociology.

INDIAN: That might be one reason you have trouble understanding India, but, as you say, let's get back to the point. High and low castes have a lot to do with purity—ritual purity. We Hindus have divided everything into pure and impure. That's not the same as sanitary or unsanitary, I might add. For example, meat eating, especially beef, is polluting; alcohol is polluting to some, and so are occupations dealing with the body, like cutting hair. Animal skinning and garbage collecting are also polluting jobs. On the other hand, bathing is ritually purifying; fire can be purifying; the water of the Ganges is purifying. Generally, the more purified the daily life, the higher the caste. Less ritually pure behavior means lower caste, although there are exceptions.

AMERICAN: How does a low-caste person feel about this? Does he want to move up?

INDIAN: Many lower-caste members probably think they are exactly where they should be; that it's a result of deeds done, good or bad, in past lives. Others may think moving up is a good thing. Let me give you one example. The Chamars, people who used to do mainly cow skinning, have a caste tradition that they used to be Brahmins, but long ago one of them was trying to help a cow out of the mud by pulling on its tail and the cow died just as some people were passing by. The Chamars were accused of killing the cow and were polluted by that and condemned to live in a low caste. Caste has never been as rigid as many think. In ancient times people moved up quite often. The scriptures and epics like the *Mahabharata* speak of this a lot. One of our great anthropologists, Prof. Srinivas, has studied this moving up the scale by caste. He calls the process Sanskritization.

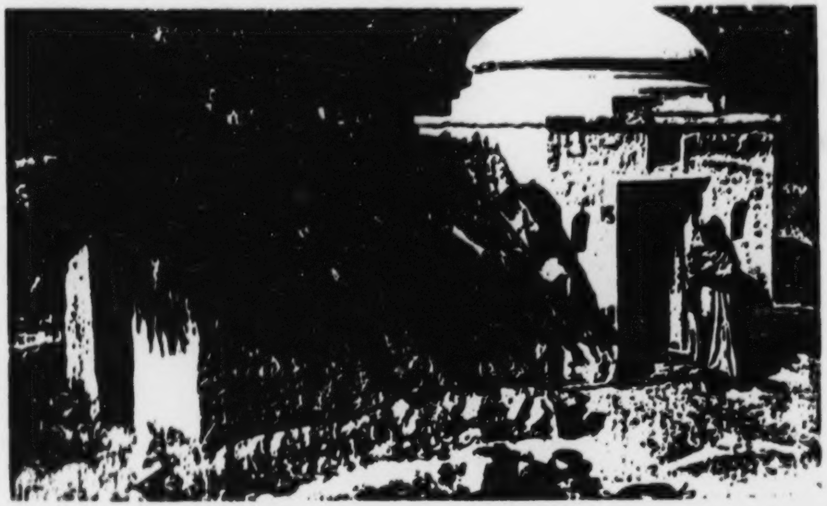
AMERICAN: What does that mean?

INDIAN: It is quite simple, actually. Sanskrit was and is the classical language of India. It is associated with high culture, often Brahmin culture. It's more than a language, really, it's a way of life. Sanskrit culture means the highest culture. When a lower caste imitates the behavior of an upper, often Brahmin, caste, that's called "Sanskritization." It doesn't mean that the lower caste learns to speak Sanskrit.

AMERICAN: I can understand moving up as a caste group, but

I don't quite understand that way of imitating upper-caste behavior. I thought moving up the scale meant driving a bigger car, getting invited to fancy parties, doing things that were more fun.

INDIAN: Don't forget we're talking about India, not America. The upper castes in India are associated with ritual purity. So a caste that makes its move upward often imitates this ritual purity of the Brahmins. If a low caste eats meat, it might become vegetarian when it moves up; it might perform religious rituals more carefully; it might stop drinking alcohol. It might even change its caste name in the hope that other people will think it is a higher caste.



This untouchable woman has built a small temple next to her house. She is "reading" a book that consists of two words: "Sita-Ram." (Donald and Jean Johnson)

AMERICAN: But that's no fun. In America, going up the ladder means you live better.

INDIAN: I told you, this is India, not America. Remember the Nadars I spoke of earlier—the untouchable caste that moved up in South India? One of the ways they spent their new money was on building temples. That's because temple building is associated with the upper castes. By the way, didn't your John D. Rockefeller build a cathedral in New York?

AMERICAN: Yes, I guess he did.

INDIAN: There's one more thing. Here in India we hardly ever refer to the "caste system" or to caste at all. "Caste" is a Portuguese word. We speak of our *community* instead. Of course, "community" doesn't mean to us what you mean by the word. It means all the things we've been talking about. And more.

AMERICAN: It's certainly complicated.

INDIAN: Yes and no. Yes, if you're looking at it from the outside; no, if you're a part of it.

Untouchability

Editors' Introduction: Many people confuse the caste system with untouchability. Traditionally, the untouchables, who were responsible for the unclean work of society, were outside the four major castes. They collected dead animals and skinned them, swept the streets and carried away the human waste, washed the clothes, and delivered the babies. These jobs were considered unclean, both ritually and literally. Because those who performed these tasks often carried diseases, people feared contact with them, so over the years they became "untouchable."

Quarantining diseased people is an accepted means of preventing infection in many societies. However, this practice became extremely rigid in India and evolved into the untouchable system, prohibiting all contact between untouchables and caste Hindus. In some areas of India, untouchables had to ring a bell to announce their approach so that not even their shadow would fall on one in the higher castes. Money that passed through their hands had to be rinsed off; food that they received in payment for work was tossed to them.

Mahatma Gandhi, the great leader of India's independence movement, worked for much of his life to eliminate untouchability. He renamed the untouchables *Harijans*—children of God. He was as interested in seeing untouchability eliminated as he was in seeing India gain *swaraj* ("self-government"). The following selection is from a speech he delivered before a Convention of Untouchables in April, 1921. Note the way he uses the Hindu epics, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata.*

From an Address by M. K. Gandhi. Reprinted from *The Gandhi Reader* by Homer Jack, pp. 162–67, by permission of Indiana University Press.

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I REGARD UNTOUCHABILITY as the greatest blot on Hinduism. . . .

I was hardly yet twelve when this idea had dawned on me. A scavenger named Uka, an untouchable, used to attend our house for cleaning latrines. Often I would ask my mother why it was wrong to touch him, why I was forbidden to touch him. If I accidentally touched Uka, I was asked to perform the [ritual] ablutions, and though I naturally obeyed, it was not without smilingly protesting that untouchability was not sanctioned by religion, that is was impossible that it should be so. I was a very dutiful and obedient child and so far as it was consistent with respect for parents, I often had tussles with them on this matter. I told my mother that she was entirely wrong in considering physical contact with Uka as sinful.

While at school I would often happen to touch the "untouchables," and as I never would conceal the fact from my parents, my mother would tell me that the shortest cut to purification after the unholy touch was to cancel the touch by touching any Mussalman [muslim] passing by. And simply out of reverence and regard for my mother I often did so, but never did so believing it to be a religious obligation. . . .

The *Ramayana* used to be regularly read in our family. A Brahmin called Ladha Maharaj used to read it. He was stricken with leprosy, and he was confident that a regular reading of the *Ramayana* would cure him of leprosy, and, indeed he was cured of it. "How can the *Ramayana*," I thought to myself, "in which one who is regarded nowadays as an untouchable took Rama across the Ganges in his boat, countenance the idea of any human beings being untouchable on the ground that they were polluted souls?" The fact that we addressed God as the "purifier of the polluted" and by similar appellations shows that it is a sin to regard anyone born into Hinduism as polluted or untouchable—that it is satanic to do so. I have hence been never tired of repeating that it is a great sin. . . .

There was a time when I was wavering between Hinduism and Christianity. When I recovered my balance of mind, I felt that to me salvation was possible only through the Hindu religion, and my faith in Hinduism grew deeper and more enlightened.

But even then I believed that untouchability was no part of Hinduism and that, if it was, such Hinduism was not for me. . . .

So long as the Hindus willfully regard untouchability as part of their religion, so long as the mass of Hindus consider it a sin to touch a section of their brethren, *swaraj* ["self-government"] is impossible of attainment. Yudhishthira [a hero of the *Mahabharata*] would not enter heaven without his [unclean] dog. How, then, can the descendants of that Yudhishthira expect to obtain *swaraj* without the untouchables? What crimes, for which we condemn the [British] government as satanic, have not we been guilty of toward our untouchable brethren?

We are guilty of having suppressed our brethren; we make them crawl on their bellies; we have made them rub their noses on the ground; with eyes red with rage, we push them out of railway compartments—what more than this has British Rule done? . . . We ought to purge ourselves of this pollution. . . .

If it can bring any comfort to you, my untouchable brethren, I would say that your question does not cause so much stir as it used to do formerly. That does not mean that I expect you to cease to have misgivings about the Hindus. How can they deserve not to be mistrusted, having wronged you so much? Swami Vivekananda used to say that the untouchables were not depressed, they were suppressed by the Hindus, who in turn had suppressed themselves by suppressing them.

You should realize that you are cleaning Hindu society. You have therefore to purify your lives. You should cultivate the habits of cleanliness, so that no one may point his finger at you. Use alkali ash or earth, if you cannot afford to use soap, to keep yourselves clean. Some of you are given to

Animal skinners (untouchables) learning improved methods of hide processing. (United Nations)

drinking and gambling, which you must get rid of. You will point your finger at the Brahmins and say even they are given to these vices. But they are not looked upon as polluted, and you are. You must not ask the Hindus to emancipate you as a matter of favor. Hindus must do so, if they want, in their own interest. You should, therefore, make them feel ashamed by your own purity and cleanliness.

I have come in contact with the untouchables all over the country, and I have observed that immense possibilities lie latent in them of which neither they nor the rest of the Hindus seem to be aware. Their intellect is of virginal purity. I ask you to learn spinning and weaving. If you take them up as a profession, you will keep poverty from your doors. As regards your attitude toward the *bhangis* ["scavengers"], . . . I can-

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not understand why you should yourselves countenance the distinction between *dheds* [a weaver caste reduced to untouchables] and *bhangis*. There is no difference between them. Even in normal times their occupation is as honorable as that of lawyers or government servants.

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"Let Every Caste Be Touchable"

§*Editors' Introduction*: Untouchability was abolished by law in the Indian Constitution in 1949. Legally, all who had been untouchable were now "ex-untouchables." But eliminating the pain of the thousands of years of untouchability—or the practice—is not accomplished merely by passing a law. Think of the legacy of racial segregation and the condition of black Americans today. Have civil rights laws solved that problem?

Like racial discrimination within the United States, caste discrimination and untouchability still exist all over India. However, the problem is less severe in cities, where all kinds of people travel side by side in city buses and eat together in restaurants. But even in the cities, former untouchables face many problems. Harold Isaacs, an American scholar, discusses some of these problems in the following excerpts from his book *India's Ex-Untouchables*. Which of these problems are similar to those faced by minority groups in America? Which are unique to the Indian setting?§

THE [INDIAN] GOVERNMENT, itself caught by so much ambivalence and conflict over the caste system, is committed to giving the ex-untouchables special help. It is doing this not only by helping them through school but by opening the way afterward to jobs. Since ex-untouchables cannot hope to find

Harold Isaacs, *India's Ex-Untouchables* (New York: John Day, 1965). Available in a Harper and Row paperback, 1974. Reprinted with the kind permission of the author.

jobs in a society still dominated by caste-bound Hindus, the government has opened its own services and has set up quotas of reserved places for them to fill as they qualify.

This system of "reserved places" or "reservations" began well back in the British time, mainly for the benefit of the non-Brahmin lower castes, and came partly as a result of the non-Brahmin fight against Brahmin domination. It has been enormously expanded by the government of independent India. It is now the lifeline by which more and more people are pulling themselves—or are being pulled—out of the cesspools of untouchability.

[The problem with the compensatory policy of "reserved places" is that it accentuates one's former untouchability rather than working to eliminate it. Another "solution" is for untouchables to try to pass themselves off as members of another caste.]

Many of those who have moved up in life have naturally continued to find it easier to "pass" in many situations than not to, and . . . this often meant not falsifying your identity but not proclaiming it either. . . . Wherever it was needful or possible, you would pass, whether while traveling or even, in a more consistent way, at your place of work, where what other people did not know could never hurt you. The need to "pass" on a more consistent basis seemed to come most often out of the effort to get better housing.

But there are serious limits to how far and for how long an educated ex-untouchable can continue to pass successfully in India today. . . . [As one informant explained:]

> If a man conceals his caste, sooner or later it is discovered, and then he suffers a lot. There was a Mahar, a contractor who got rich. He told everybody he was a Mahratta. He lived in a caste Hindu community and never disclosed his caste. But then his daughter died. The custom is that your relatives must come to prepare the body, not yourself or a stranger. But nobody came. No Mahrattas came, of course. He had cut himself off from his relatives, so they didn't come. Some of his friends and neighbors came and said to him: "How is it nobody is here? Call your nearest relative now, right away!" In desperation he finally called on some of his old people to come to lift the body. When they came, the neighbors recognized them from their clothes, their language, the way they talked, and his caste was disclosed. He suffered. We say to such a man, "You see, you wanted to be a Brahmin or a Mahratta, why should we feel sympathy for you?"

Marriage remains the most formidable barrier in the path of anyone who wishes to escape his caste. Intercaste marriage among . . . Hindus is less infrequent in India now than it was a generation ago, but such marriages involving [untouchables] are still extremely rare.

The point about marriage is that ex-untouchables who pass are unlikely to find mates for their children outside their caste, and if they do, they are unlikely to be able to keep their own caste background hidden. "It is possible, but not very likely," said one informant. "In India everybody knows everybody's caste one way or another, sooner or later. The educated people can separate, yet they can't separate, for community is part of this society. You can't be without a community. Without a community, it is awkward for a man in all his relationships. This is the culture of the country. *In India you have got to be connected.*"

The inescapable facts of caste life in India have led some ex-untouchables to devise an in-between style, a kind of semi-passing, as the solution to their problems. Put a bit roughly, it is a system for passing in public while not passing in private. In general it means that in all situations where self-advancement, comfort, and convenience dictate it, an ex-untouchable passes as a member of some higher caste. At the same time, in all the circumstances that demand it—death, marriage, even voluntary work for the community—he leads a second or double life in the bosom of his community.

[Another way out is to convert to a different faith, such as Buddhism, Christianity, or Islam. But many do not regard this step as necessary.

One young woman who had become a physician explained it the following way:]

> God has created us in this community and we are proud. I want to see our community come up to a higher level, to the standard of the others. It shall remain a caste, but will become like the others. . . . At present, marriage should stay within the caste. In the future if conditions change, it may not matter, but I would want my children to marry in the caste. We will tell our children that they are of our community. We will explain so that they will understand and know and help our community. . . .

This was essentially Gandhi's view of the way out: to preserve the caste system but to reform it by doing away with untouchability, to give the untouchables access to the temples, access to the common utilities such as wells, and assistance to raise their conditions of life to some more tolerable level, such as getting the night soil off their heads and into wheelbarrows. . . . What has been legally "abolished" is not caste but untouchability, and the problem is to transform this legal fact into social reality. Let the untouchable groups cross that line and rejoin the mass of lowly Shudras, let them remain as humble as they might be, let them retain all their divisions and subdivisions like everyone else, but let them be *touchable*. . . .

Flickering here and there among these thoughts of the future was the gleam of an idea larger than untouchability and surviving caste. This was the notion that there was a larger common identity for all to share, an identity called Indian. . . .

> When anybody asks me, I say: "I belong to this nation, India. I'm an *Indian*." If they persist after that, I say: "Who are you, somebody from the census bureau?" And they keep quiet. I suppose they think: "He's an educated Mahar." And if they do, I am not ashamed. I am proud of this community, it is a fighting community, an honest

> community. But I do really *feel* like an *Indian*. This is the best answer. I consider myself one with my country.

As it does for so many Negro Americans, the question remained whether the rest of the people of his country were—or ever would be—one with him.

Proposed job plan highlights complexitie

By REENA SHAH
Times Staff Writer

ANALYSIS

The Indian prime minister's proposal that his nation of 800-million people set aside 55,000 government jobs for some of the poorest citizens seemed, at first glance, a modest one.

In India it started riots.

Students have burned themselves to death on street corners. Mobs have attacked trains. Farmers are threatening to cut off supplies of food to New Delhi, the capital.

"I cannot barter away the aspirations of the deprived," Prime Minister Vishwanath Pratap Singh said in a speech this week defending his plan. He said it provides "a glimmer of hope to . . . those who have known only social oppression for centuries."

To the surprise of many Indians — who are used to hollow promises by their leaders to help the poorest — Singh is attempting to make good on a promise he made in last year's election campaign.

Why should upper castes resist sharing power with lower castes? In the United States, for example, affirmative action programs seek to redress a 300-year wrong by helping minorities gain a larger share of certain parts of the job market. Wouldn't job reservations on a similar principle be a good idea for India, where caste labels the majority of its people as inferior and has condemned generations to a lack of education and opportunity over 4,000 years?

But in a country where successive administrations have done little to enforce a 43-year-old constitution that guarantees equal rights for all citizens, the problem is far more complex. While India remains one of the few Third World success stories, growing rapidly economically and preserving the world's largest democracy, it continues to be ripped apart by factions fighting in the name of religion, regionalism and caste.

The caste system divides Indian society into four tiers, and birth determines a person's occupation and social standing. The majority of Indians — more than 600-million of them — belong to the fourth and lowest tier, and have traditionally been confined to work others consider menial or unclean, such as tanning leather, cremating bodies or working as farmhands. Caste began as a division of labor in ancient India but hardened to a system that concentrated privilege in the upper castes and permanently trapped lower castes.

Although education and urbanization have brought some upward mobility today, caste may still scar a person's life. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, a brilliant scholar and one of the framers of India's constitution, belonged to an "untouchable" caste, the lowest. During his school years, he sat outside classrooms because he wasn't allowed to share the same space as his higher-caste schoolmates.

During India's struggle for independence from Britain, Ambedkar was tempted to lobby for a separate homeland for lower castes, just as Moslems asked for Pakistan to free themselves of Hindu domination. But Ambedkar's esteem for Mahatma Gandhi, who labeled untouchables "God's people," persuaded him to give up such a demand.

Ambedkar died a bitter man. In his writings, he complained that in spite of his education and his high administrative jobs, he was discriminated against by subordinates who wouldn't handle files he had touched and wouldn't dine at the same table. Even today, such prejudices linger, especially in rural India. Some doctors refuse to touch patients, even in emergency wards, if they belong to lower castes.

Yet wealth is no longer automatically concentrated in upper castes. There is more upward mobility (which a rigid caste system restricts) and class — a di-

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# of India caste system

vision on economic lines — is a more potent concern for the millions of Indians who want to nudge upward to join the middle class or the upper class.

The students immolating themselves aren't rich people fighting to retain royal benefits. They may be of higher birth, but that doesn't get them special privileges.

At present, 22 percent of certain government jobs are reserved for lower castes; Singh wants to raise that figure to nearly 50 percent. To do that, he has to take jobs from a middle class of 150-million in a nation where the per capita income is $330 and unemployment and inflation are so high that every Indian is in economic competition with 800-million others.

More than 30-million educated Indians (three times the population of Florida) are unemployed. Many have advanced university degrees and are denied government jobs that lie vacant because qualified lower-caste candidates cannot be found. It has been estimated that only 5 percent of civil service jobs are filled by members of lower castes. That's because the government hasn't made education widely available and the majority of members of the lower castes continue to live in rural areas, are illiterate and unaware of opportunities.

And since major Indian industries and universities are under government control, many middle-class people fear that the reservation system may in the future be extended to college admissions and jobs in banks and factories.

The lower castes have long been marginalized, even terrorized.

Last May, for example, a landlord in Singh's constituency burned one of his laborers to death. The man's offense was that he refused to let the landlord sleep with his new bride — a practice that has no legal or customary sanction, but is a feudal privilege some landowners continue to assert.

In urban India, the anonymity of the city has diluted people's beliefs in caste. Some educated, middle-class Indians feel cheated by Singh's plan. They reason that they don't actively discriminate against lower castes and they pay taxes, yet the government will limit opportunities for their children simply because they are considered to be of higher birth.

"If the government had set aside doles or welfare payments for 55,000 people on the basis of caste, chances are there wouldn't be a whimper of protest," wrote the national newsmagazine *India Today*. "But reserving jobs — the vehicles of future livelihood — on the basis of caste has touched a raw nerve."

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Classifieds

Matrimonial

Female

CORRESPONDENCE is invited from Gujarati male for sister 36 years old, 5'2", permanent resident, B.Sc., good looking, smart, born and raised in Bombay, never married, recently came from India. Ready to settle anywhere in USA. Please write with biodata and returnable picture to **Mr. A. Patel, P.O. Box 14, Willow Springs, Il. 60480.**

WELL-SETTLED, educated, Muslim between 40-45 years for very pretty 37 years old, divorcee, green card holder. Write with details and photo to **I.Trib. Box #AI43019F.**

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CORRESPONDENCE invited from tall, handsome, educated Punjabi boy for 26-years-old, 5'5", beautiful, slim, MBA, working in one of the best companies in Canada. Write with all details to **I.Trib. Box #A43002F.**

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SISTER invites correspondence for 29 years old, M.S. in Home Science , 5'6", Vaishnav Vanik families should write to **I.Trib. Box #AI43016F.**

SOUTH Indian, U.S. Citizen, fair, beautiful, software professional, non-vegetarian girl, 29, 5'3", innocently divorced, seeks alliance with non-smoking, well educated boy. Send biodata to **I.Trib. Box #AI43017F.**

SISTER in Canada invites alliance for convent educated, cultured, humorous, 26, 5'3", 154 lbs., Hindu Agrawal girl in India, B.Com / Public Relations, computers, travelled abroad, East/West values, no bar. Call: (613) 736-7991.

SOPHISTICATED, very attractive, petite, Ivy League educated, 28 years old, 5'5" North Indian girl, seeks formal enquiries from executive Hindu professionals with East and West influences, handsome, caste no bar. Write with all particulars to **I.Trib. Box #A43018F.**

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PUNJABI Hindu Khatri parents invite correspondence from professionals for their Physical Therapist daughter, 24, 5'4", beautiful, slim. Write with all particulars to **I.Trib. Box #A43014F.**

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WELL SETTLED, Gujarati Jain, parents invite correspondence from family-oriented, Gujarati Jain girls, for their son 29 years old, 5'4". Call: **(516) 433-9246, (201) 795-1163.**

WARM & very caring 38 years old, 5'7", never married, with passion for life, financially secure, pharmacist, US resident, handsome, likes outdoors, skiing, music, cooking. Seeking compatible mate of any religion. Write with details to **I.Trib. Box #B57445M.**

CORRESPONDENCE invited for Gujarati boy 26 years old, engineer from Northwestern University, working in a family business in India, 5'10", wheat complexioned and only son of parents. Girl must be fairly tall, slim, well-educated, preferably Gujarati family. Write with all particulars to **I.Trib. Box #B57454M.**

GUJARATI parents invite correspondence for son 28 years old, 5'8", 165 lbs., BS electrical engineering, computer architecture, captain U.S. army reserves, professional job in Wall Street, good & loving nature, U.S. citizen. Send biodata and photo to **1258 Wildflowers Downs, Lawrenceville, GA 30244. Call: (404) 963-7843.**

CORRESPONDENCE invited from good-natured ladies of good family background for 38 years old, Gujarati Patel, handsome, innocently divorced, having one child, vegetarian, non-smoker, with excellent family background. Write with all particulars to **I.Trib. Box #B57455M.**

CORRESPONDENCE invited from tall, slim, beautiful, educated girl from decent family for 26 years old, 5'8", fair, handsome, teetotaller, M.Com., MBA, employed, on H1 visa, from Jain family. Write with all particulars to **I.Trib. Box #B57435M.**

CORRESPONDENCE invited from beautiful, well educated, cultured, slim, Gujarati girl for handsome, MS in computer science, well-settled, working in top-notch Insurance company, 29 years old, 5'8", divorced after brief marriage, non-smoker, non-drinker, affectionate, enjoys reading. Write with all particulars to **I.Trib. Box #B57463M.**

Male

AGRAWAL parents seek alliance for very handsome son, Canadian born and educated, 30/5'8"/140 lbs.running very successful, well-established large business. Call: **(519) 942-4732.**

CORRESPONDENCE invited from professional, charming, Muslim lady in mid 30-40, for handsome, intelligent, modern outlook, financially secure, MD from Pakistan, 45 years old, US citizen, divorcee. Write with all particulars to **I.Trib. Box #B57446M.**

SINDHI US citizen 26 years old, 5'10", good looking, electronic engineer, enjoys playing tennis & swimming, looking for good looking, educated girl, no bar. Write with all particulars to **I.Trib. Box #BI57466M.**

SINDHI US citizen 27, 5'7", very good surgical resident, enjoys tennis and swimming, looking for good looking, educated girl, no bar. Write with all particulars to **I.Trib. Box #BI57467M.**

CORRESPONDENCE invited for Punjabi Brahmin, practising physician, 38 years old, never married, vegetarian, teetotaller, very handsome, 5'10", seeks educated, good looking, cultured girl, caste no bar. Write with all particulars to **I.Trib. Box #57468M.**

MAHARASHTRIAN Brahmin parents invite correspondence for their son, 31 years old, 5'8", fair, handsome, MS, green card holder, employed as a systems engineer in a multinational company, from pretty, fair, smart girl, professional. Modern and strong sense of Indian culture. Write with all particulars to **I.Trib. Box #B57444M.**

PATEL parents seek educated, professional, tall, sophisticated, pretty, Gujarati girl; for their athletic, handsome, 27 years old, 5'11", 165 lbs., son; MS computer engg., Software consultant. Call: **(203) 563-6093.**

HINDU parents invite correspondence with photograph from very beautiful, educated girls for their exceptionally handsome, very successful physician son, 32 years old, 5'6", with dynamic personality. Caste no bar. Write with all particulars to **I.Trib. Box #B57469M.**

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SUBSCRIPTION

X, xc: THE SACRIFICE OF PRIMAL MAN
(*puruṣa* = 'male person')

§ 1. A thousand heads had [primal] Man,
A thousand eyes, a thousand feet:
Encompassing the earth on every side,
He exceeded it by ten fingers' [breadth].

§ 2. [That] Man is this whole universe, —
What was and what is yet to be,
The Lord of immortality
Which he outgrows by [eating] food.

§ 3. This is the measure of his greatness,
But greater yet is [primal] Man:
All beings form a quarter of him,
Three-quarters are the immortal in heaven.

§ 4. With three-quarters Man rose up on high,
A quarter of him came to be again [down] here:
From this he spread in all directions,
Into all that eats and does not eat.

§ 5. From him was Virāj born,
From Virāj Man again:
Once born, — behind, before,
He reached beyond the earth.

§ 6. When with Man as their oblation
The gods performed the sacrifice,
Spring was the melted butter,
Summer the fuel, and autumn the oblation.

§ 7. Him they besprinkled on the sacrificial strew, —
[Primeval] Man, born in the beginning:
With him [their victim], gods, Sādhyas, seers
Performed the sacrifice.

§ 8. From this sacrifice completely offered
The clotted ghee was gathered up:
From this he fashioned beasts and birds,
Creatures of the woods and creatures of the village.

§ 9. From this sacrifice completely offered
Were born the Rig- and Sāma-Vedas;
From this were born the metres,
From this was the Yajur-Veda born.

§ 10. From this were horses born, all creatures
That have teeth in either jaw:
From this were cattle born,
From this sprang goats and sheep.

§ 11. When they divided [primal] Man,
Into how many parts did they divide him?
What was his mouth? What his arms?
What are his thighs called? What his feet?

§ 12. The Brāhman was his mouth,
The arms were made the Prince,
His thighs the common people,
And from his feet the serf was born.

§ 13. From his mind the moon was born,
And from his eye the sun,
From his mouth Indra and the fire,
From his breath the wind was born.

§ 14. From his navel arose the atmosphere,
From his head the sky evolved,
From his feet the earth, and from his ear
The cardinal points of the compass:
So did they fashion forth these worlds.

§ 15. Seven were his enclosing sticks,
Thrice seven were made his fuel-sticks,
When the gods, performing sacrifice,
Bound Man, [their sacrificial] beast.

§ 16. With sacrifice the gods
Made sacrifice to sacrifice:
These were the first religious rites (*dharma*),
To the firmament these powers went up
Where dwell the ancient Sādhya gods.

Hindu Scriptures. R.C. Zaehner, trans. and ed. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992.

Rig-Veda XXXI,i

"Hymn to Agni"

I extol Agni, the household priest, the divine minister of the sacrifice, the chief priest, the bestower of blessings.

May that Agni, who is to be extoled by ancient and modern seers, conduct the gods here.

Through Agni may one gain day by day wealth and welfare which is glorious and replete with heroic sons.

O Agni, the sacrifice and ritual which you encompass on every side, that indeed goes to the gods.

May Agni, the chief priest, who possesses the insight of a sage, who is truthful, widely renowned, and divine, come here with the gods.

O Agni, O Angiras ("messenger"), whatever prosperity you bring to the pious is indeed in accordance with your true function.

O Agni, illuminator of darkness, day be day we approach you with holy thought bringing homage to you,

Presiding at ritual functions, the brightly shining custodian of the cosmic order, thriving in you own realm.

O Agni, be easy of access to us as a father to his son. Join us for our wellbeing.

(no attribution available)

Excerpts from the Upanishads
Zaehner, R. C. Hindu Scriptures. New York: Alfred A. Knopf., 1992.

From the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad

(In this excerpt, the main speaker, Yajnavalkya, has been asked to talk about the Inner Controller, i.e., Brahman and Brahman's presence in individuals as atman. Yajnavalkya sets up a word formula(mantra) in which he speaks of Brahman and atman and where each may be found.)

(2) Yajnavalky, now tell us about the Inner Controller.

(3) He who, abiding in the earth, is other than the earth, who controls the earth from within, -- he is the Self within you, the Inner Controller, the Immortal.

(The next twelve stanzas repeat this formula by replacing the underlined word with the following: water, fire, atmosphere, wind, sky, sun, points of the compass, moon and stars, space, darkness, light, and contingent beings. In other words, Brahman is everywhere, in everything and everyone! Yajnavalkya next describes Brahman as it is found in beings, i.e. as atman -- again in a mantric formula.)

(15) Now with regard to the self.

(16) He who, abiding in breath, is other than breath, whom breath does not know, whose body is breath, who controls breath from within, -- he is the Self within you, the Inner Controller, the Immortal.

(The next seven stanzas repeat this formula by replacing the underlined word with the following: voice, eye, ear, mind, skin, understanding, and semen. In other words, Brahman-as-atman permeates the existence of beings -- human and otherwise.)

(23) He is the unseen seer, the unheard hearer, the unthought thinker, the ununderstood understander. No other seer than He is there, no other hearer than He, no other thinker than He, no other understander than He: He is the Self within you, the Inner Controller, the Immortal. What is other than He suffers.

From the Chandogya Upanishad

(In this excerpt, a young Brahmin named Svetaketu spent twelve years studing the Vedas and returned to his home "conceited, priding himself on his learning....")

(VI, i,) Then his father said to him: "Svetaketu, my boy, since you are now conceited and pride yourself on your learning, did you also ask about that teaching by which what had hitherto not been heard, is heard; what had hitherto not been thought of, is thought of, and what had hitherto not been known, is known?"

"Now, I am sure (that my honorable teachers) did not know this; for if they had known it, why should they not have told me? Do you, sir, then tell me."

"My dear boy, I will," said (his father).

(VI, xii) "Bring me a fig from over there."
"Here you are, sir."
"Cut it open."
"There it is, cut open, sir."
"What do you see there?"
"These rather small seeds, sir."
"Would you, please, cut one of them up?"
"Here is one, cut up, sir."
"What do you see there?"
"Nothing at all, sir."

Then (the father) said to (Svetaketu): "My dear boy, it is true that you cannot perceive this smallest essence, but it is equally true that this huge fig tree grows up from this same smallest essence. "My dear child, have faith. This smallest essence, -- the whole universe has it as its Self: That is the Real: That is the Self: That you are, Svetaketu!"

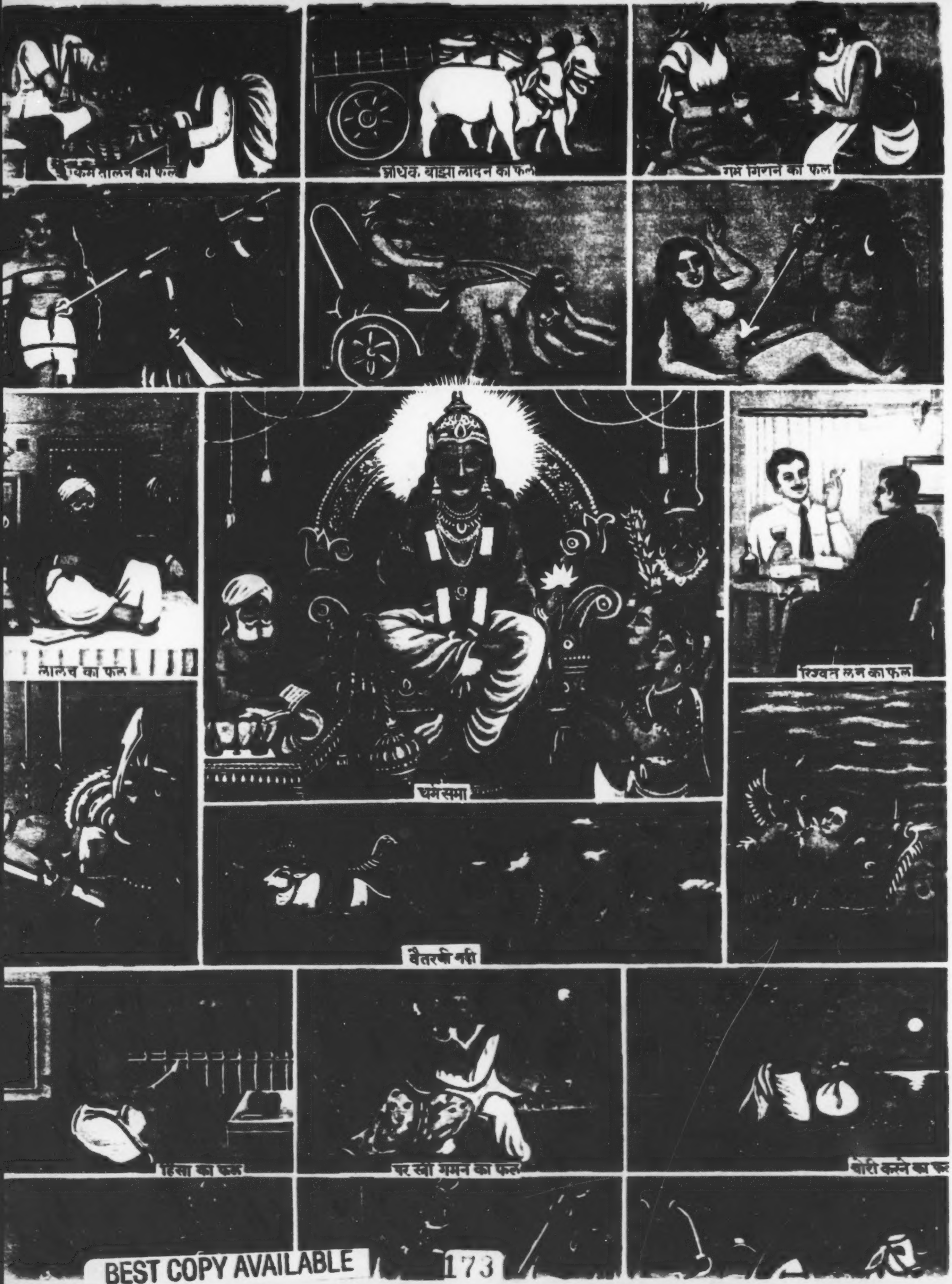
"Good sir, will you kindly instruct me further?"

"I will, my dear child," said (his father).

(VI, xiii) "Put this piece of salt in the water and come to me tomorrow morning." Svetaketu did as he was told. Then his father said to him: "Do you remember that piece of salt you put in the water yesterday evening? Would you be good enough to bring it here?" (Svetaketu) groped for it but could not find it. It had completely dissolved.

"Would you please sip it at this end? What is it like?" (his father) said.
"Salt."
"Sip it in the middle. What is it like?"
"Salt."
"Sip it at the far end. What is it like?"
"Salt."

"Throw it away, and then come to me." (Svetaketu) did as he was told; but that did not stop the salt from remaining ever the same. His father said to him: "My dear child, it is true that you cannot perceive Being here, but it is equally true that it is here. This smallest essence, -- the whole universe has it as its Self: That is the Real: That is the Self: That you are, Svetaketu!"


कम तोलन का फल
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पर स्त्री गमन का फल
चोरी करने का फल

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Bond, Constance. India's divine art reveals a god as savant and rogue. Smithsonian May 1981: 58-67.

By Constance Bond

India's divine art reveals a god as savant and rogue

The great deity Shiva, both lover and yogi, creator and destroyer, seems contradictory—but to a Hindu all the parts fit perfectly

When we think of India today, we think of 680 million people crowded onto a great subcontinent that stretches from the Himalayas in the north to Sri Lanka in the south. There is, still, a caste system. And there is Hinduism, a religion that has shaped every aspect of daily life. From birth to death, life in India, perhaps more than elsewhere, is a life defined by rules.

And yet one of the favorite gods in India, Shiva, is a god who breaks all the rules. He is at once an ascetic, a sexually abstinent practitioner of yoga—and a passionate lover, a married man with two children. He is the elegant teacher of dancing and music—and a madman, at times so drunk that he can't even keep his balance. He is worshiped throughout India by the humblest peasant—and by the most sophisticated city dweller. He is, quite simply, a very complex god.

~~It was precisely because of Shiva's complexity and the marvelous expressiveness of the art that portrays him that Dr. Stella Kramrisch, Curator of Indian Art at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, decided to organize an exhibition devoted exclusively to him. That was ten years ago. It took that long to mount "Manifestations of Shiva," now open at the Philadelphia Museum of Art and running until June 7. It will then travel to the Kimbell Art Museum in Fort Worth (August 1-September 27), the Seattle Art Museum (November 25-January 31, 1982), and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (March 23-May 30, 1982). The exhibition is supported by grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Atlantic Richfield Foundation, the Pew Memorial Trust, the Indo-U.S. Subcommission on Education and Culture, Air India, and the Smithsonian Institution Foreign Currency Program.~~

~~With 129 sculptures and 64 paintings, "Manifestations of Shiva" is the largest and the most extensively documented exhibition of Hindu art ever to be presented in the United States. The works come from museums and private collections in the United States, Canada, Australia, Europe and Nepal. But the real coup, rounding out the comprehensive coverage of 2,000 years of artistic expression, is 22 sculptures that were sent over from India.~~

There are two ways of viewing this show. One is to enjoy great art. The other is to experience it as an integral part of the culture, stepping into the life of an immense society. For example, an 18th-century painting from Rajasthan (opposite) shows the god Shiva, wearing a necklace of severed heads, dancing on a hillside. Above him hovers the form of an elephant, actually the flayed skin of a demon he has just slain. On the surface it is, to the Western eye, an odd and even fanciful picture. But to the Hindu who has been brought up from birth living with art that is part of his everyday life, it expresses fundamental truths about the transience of human life (symbolized by the necklace) and Shiva's incredible power over all things transient (expressed in his dance of victory).

From fertility worship to philosophical treatises

More than 500 million of India's inhabitants are Hindus (the others are Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis or Jews). Hinduism is an amalgam of many levels and currents of belief, some very primitive and intuitive, some highly intellectual and philosophical. Its roots go back at least to the Indus Valley Civilization (third millennium B.C.), a highly developed urban culture located in present-day Pakistan. Objects from that civilization representing seated figures in yogic posture, female figures with exaggerated hips and breasts, and elongated stones that probably were worshiped as phallic emblems indicate that Indus people practiced some form of yoga, as well as fertility worship.

Some time after the fall of the Indus Valley Civilization, around 1700 B.C., massive invasions by Aryans from the northwest of India permanently changed Indian culture. In their hymns, called the Vedas, the Aryans personified the various forces of nature as gods.

Shiva dances after victory over an elephant demon; severed heads symbolize endless cycle of rebirth.

(see last page)

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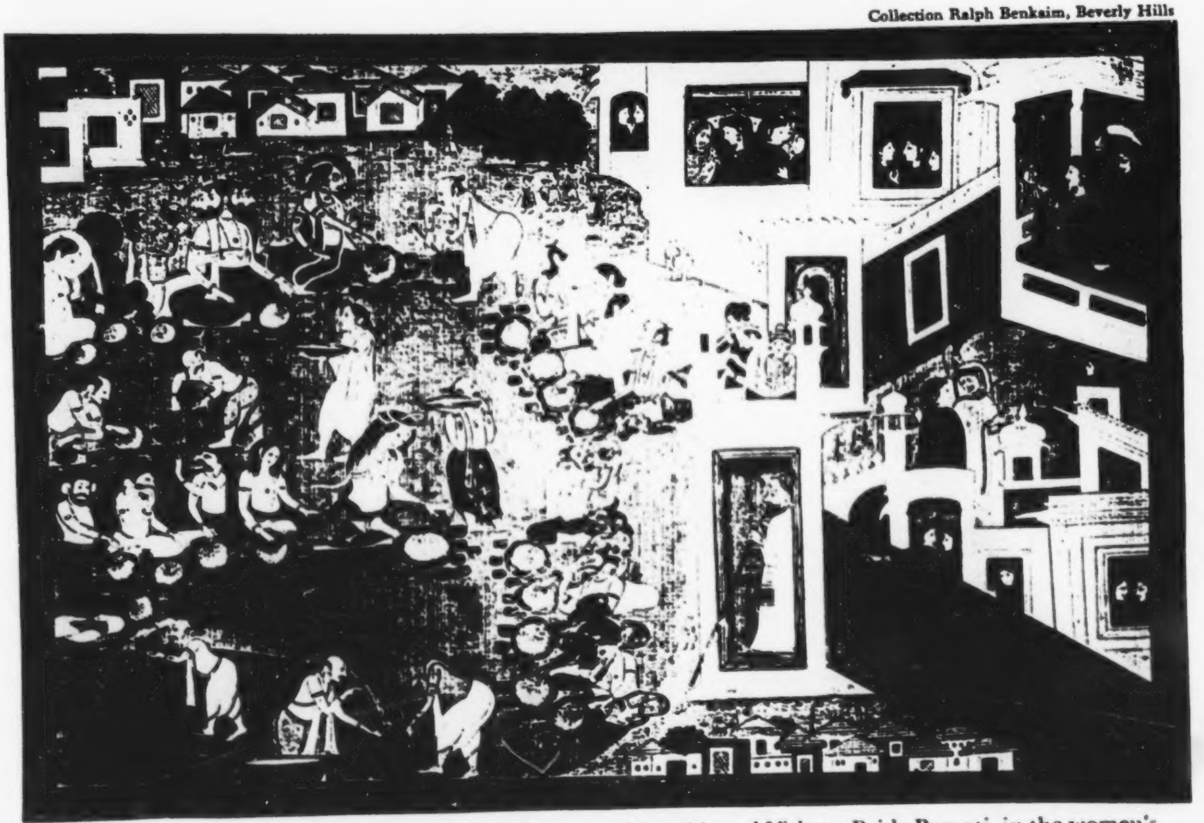
Collection Ralph Benkaim, Beverly Hills



At his wedding feast, Shiva (entwined with snake) sits in center of circle below multi-headed Brahma, blue-skinned Vishnu. Bride Parvati, in the women's quarters at upper right, demurely awaits her husband.

In the latest phase of the Vedic period, all the gods came to be viewed as manifestations of a single absolute being, called Brahma, as people speculated about the nature of reality and existence.

By about 200 B.C., all of the currents—pre-Vedic and Vedic—coalesced into a new religion called Hinduism. During the first five or six centuries A.D., ancient myths relating in wonderful detail the exploits of the Hindu gods were gathered together into vast compilations, called the Puranas.

Today, every Hindu is able to select from among the numerous gods and goddesses in the Hindu pantheon, each choosing the one, or several, to whom he or she feels most strongly drawn. But underlying this flexibility are several beliefs that all Hindus share.

The first is that the universe is created and destroyed in an endless succession of repeating cycles. In the traditional view, three gods are of paramount importance because it is they who make these cycles possible. Brahma, the creator, causes all the elements in the "formless void" to come together and assume the shape of a universe. Vishnu, the preserver, maintains and protects the universe as it runs its course. And Shiva is the destroyer—it is he who sets in motion the disintegration of all the elements in the universe, a dissolution back to a formless void so that the cycle can be repeated once again.

Constance Bond, an Assistant Editor of SMITHSONIAN, *did art history fieldwork in India while she was doing graduate research at the Ohio State University.*

Hindus also believe that living beings experience rebirth. Everyone has a soul that is eternal and identical with the absolute or Supreme Being, who exists in a state of continual flux outside time. Yet, everyone is caught in the "wheel of life." Death is not release from this endless cycle. As one lives through each successive incarnation, he accrues *karma* ("actions"): a cowherd who accrues good *karma* may be reborn a landowner; with bad *karma* he may return as an ant.

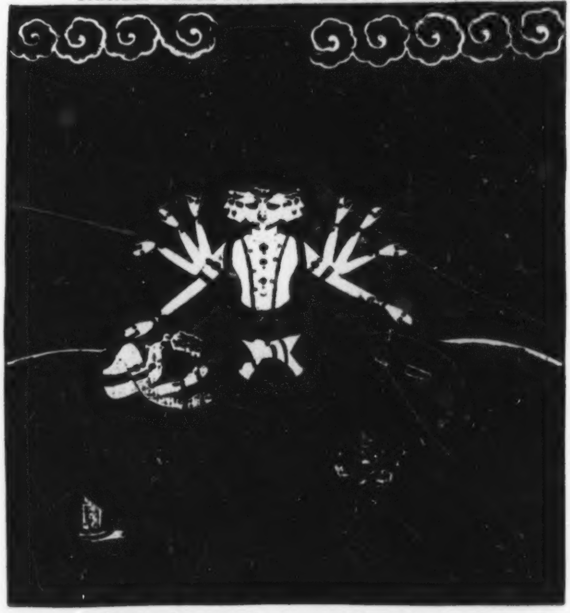
Though no Hindu wants to move down in the wheel of life, the ultimate goal is release from this endless cycle of rebirth. Release, or *moksha*, is escape of the soul from the fetters of the wheel of life—this everyday, material world—to a merging with the Supreme Being.

When these basic beliefs of Hinduism developed around 200 B.C., the god Brahma was as important as Vishnu and Shiva. As time passed, Brahma gradually fell from favor while Shiva and Vishnu were joined in popularity by the goddess Devi. Today many Hindus view one or the other of these gods as the Supreme Being. The Shaivites—as followers of Shiva are called—regard Shiva as the Supreme Being and all the other gods as of somewhat lesser importance. For Shaivites, therefore, Shiva assumes all the essential roles of creator, preserver and destroyer; he is the ultimate source of all energy in the universe, unfolding the observable world out of his own substance.

Vishnu, an Aryan god, is associated with the sun and possesses a benevolent nature. Shiva, on the other hand, is associated with the moon—a far more mysterious heavenly body, and various passages in the Vedas describe him as the "howling, roaring" deity, a wild and unruly hunter.

Unlike Vishnu, Shiva is an indigenous Indian god, with many qualities that extend far back into pre-Vedic India, such as those seen in the Indus Valley Civilization. His identity encompasses a tremendous range of primitive concepts that were gradually reconciled with philosophical thought.

Collection William Theo Brown and Paul Wonner, San Francisco



Shiva made manifest in lingam of flame is worshiped by Vishnu and Brahma. Jodhpur school, c. 1850.

Supreme master of yoga—and of love

Shiva emerged in Hinduism as, first and foremost, the originator and supreme master of yoga and all the arts. Yoga is a discipline practiced for one purpose: total control of the mind and body in order to prepare for the realization of ultimate reality. As lord of dance and music, Shiva dances at critical moments, such as at creation and destruction, at his marriage, and in his madness. Each dance is different, expressing a different aspect of him.

But Shiva is also the embodiment of procreative energy. Within him are all aspects of the universe, including both the male and female principles. To express this idea, Shiva is married, enjoying a rich conjugal life with Parvati.

These two roles—on the one hand the ascetic who rises above all forms of physical life, and on the other hand a married man—would seem to be mutually exclusive. But a Shaivite realizes that, as the source of all energy, Shiva has all forms of life within him, and that it is his perfection as the great yogi that allows him to play out all other forms of existence for his worshipers' benefit.

For the Hindu, Shiva is indefinable. But worshipers need some kind of concrete image on which to focus. The sculptures and paintings that represent Shiva and other Hindu gods and goddesses are seen as interpretations in material form of what is not of the material world at all. In addition, Hindu gods have so many aspects that any one image could not express all of them. Over time, Hindus developed a symbolic vocabulary that would be effective in conveying specific aspects or qualities of their gods. Often when Westerners see images with multiple arms, eyes or heads, they judge them as bizarre because such images are clearly not attempts to imitate nature. But the Hindu artists were guided by different standards: they saw nature as illusion, not reality. Rather than trying to copy nature, they were using the only references they had to convey to worshipers the qualities of gods that transcended nature.

And so Shiva has three eyes (one of them in his forehead), which enable him to see the three divisions of time—past, present and future. His hair is long and thickly matted in the fashion of ascetics, and often drawn up into an ascetic's topknot. Above his central eye is the crescent of the moon, which marks the measure of time by months; around his upper body is a serpent, which marks the measure of time by years. When he wears a necklace of skulls or severed heads, it symbolizes the successive cycles of creation and destruction of mankind. As universal destroyer, Shiva burned up the universe by a scorching look from his third eye, and afterward rubbed the remaining ashes on his body. Therefore, he is ashen-white.

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When Shiva is with Parvati (pp. 64-65), he is shown encompassing both female and male within his total nature. Parvati's elephant-headed son, Ganesh (p. 67), the god of wisdom and the placer and remover of all obstacles, is loved by all Hindus. Because he controls obstacles, he is invoked at the beginning of all undertakings, whether it be a simple *puja* (worship ceremony) in the home or a huge festival. Shiva's son, Karttikeya, who has six heads, is popularly regarded, as god of war.

The myths and legends about the Hindu gods, many of which appear in the Puranas, teach people the essential nature of the gods. Some give tremendous enjoyment at the basic level of a good story, but all have within them many levels of meaning. Each Hindu comprehends a myth, as he does the gods, according to his level of understanding.

One myth related in the Puranas attests to the rivalry that existed at one time between Shiva and Vishnu. Brahma and Vishnu, having met in the formless void between destruction of one universe and creation of the next, got into a heated argument about which of them was the true creator of the universe. Suddenly they were stunned by the appearance of a flaming pillar (p. 61); it was so high they could see neither its top nor bottom. So Brahma assumed the form of a swan and flew upward to find its top, while Vishnu assumed the form of a boar and dived downward to seek its base. Both returned frustrated, unable to fathom the pillar's limits. Just then the flames parted, revealing Shiva inside in all his splendor—a classic demonstration to the other gods that he was the superior one.

The flaming pillar in which Shiva appeared also had another meaning. Very early in the development of Shaivism, the phallic emblem, in the form of an upright, elongated stone, became associated with Shiva as his lingam, or sign. While at one time it was worshiped by fertility cults, it came to be regarded as the most transcendent expression of Shiva. It symbolizes both his ability as an ascetic to withhold his seed, and also his immense procreative energy.

The lingam is the main object housed in a Shaiva temple; in fact, the temple is viewed as a microcosm of the universe with the energy emanating from the lingam as its source. In the countryside, a Shaiva temple consists only of a single square room built of stone, with a lingam in its center and no decoration at all. But there is almost no limit to how elaborate a temple can be, with antechambers, pathways around the central chamber, and ornate sculptural and painted dec-

Government Museum, Madras

Graceful tenth-century granite Chola Dynasty image symbolizes unity of male and female within Shiva.

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oration. Centuries-old manuals dictate every aspect of temple layout and construction.

A Hindu generally worships in a highly personal and individual way, whether at a temple or in the home. "I used to frequent the temples in Rajasthan," says Joseph Dye, former student of Stella Kramrisch and now Curator of Asiatic Art at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts. "I'd go to one specific temple over a week's time, at a certain time every day, to see if there was a pattern of people coming and going. I remember this very old, extremely devout woman, who would come every day with her granddaughter. And the granddaughter would carry a little brass tray with flowers, fruit and a little container of water that she always had trouble balancing. The old woman would go to the doorway and face the lingam, leave the offerings, and then shout her request to Shiva so he would hear her for sure."

As with personal visits to the temple, the performance of *puja* in the home has probably remained essentially unchanged over the past 2,000 years. A family in Delhi once invited me to celebrate Diwali, a Hindu festival, with them. That evening, all three generations of the family greeted me at the door. On a low altar on the living room floor were two images each about a foot high, one of elephant-headed Ganesh, the other of Lakshmi, a goddess who brings good luck. In front of the images were trays laden with cut-up fruits, pastes of various colors, and flowers strung together on lengths of red string. Everyone sat down on the floor in a semicircle facing the images, and the grandfather took charge. Amidst chanting and prayers, he reached to the nearest tray, dipped his fingers in paste, then daubed it on the images—Ganesh first, then Lakshmi. One by one we made offerings from every tray. Eventually the images were so heavily bedecked that they were barely recognizable. After concluding prayers, the grandfather divided up the red string used in the *puja* and tied a length around everyone's wrist. For weeks afterward, Hindus I encountered asked me about this bracelet and were always pleased to learn how I had acquired it.

Though most Hindus do *puja* several times a day, they also regard every action from the moment of waking in the morning as a form of worship. Fulfilling one's given role in each life includes all activities, no matter how mundane they may appear. But while the daily life of a typical Hindu family is filled with ritual, there is within Hinduism another life-style that takes a far more philosophical approach; this is the life of

Seattle Art Museum

God of love, Kama, was sent by Brahma to divert Shiva from meditation so he would notice Parvati.

e encounters followers of
all worldly attachments
heir lives wandering on
ses from one holy spot to
s see Shiva in highly ab-
a more popular level love
seem a less awesome god,
his married life with the

d Parvati didn't go smooth-
tation when Kama, god of
g to distract him so that he
ati. But when Shiva looked
of his asceticism shot out of
na to a crisp. In the exhibi-
otic and sensuous image of
ecorated the outside wall of
Orissa.

ed Parvati, but her mother,
Shiva was a penniless ascetic,
ding. To teach her a lesson,
appointed day amidst a howl-
nd disheveled. Mena fainted.
arvati explained to her that
, awful and wonderful; he as-
is without form." Shiva then
ty, winning Mena over.

r Shiva and Parvati; like most
quarrel. Shiva loves to cheat
Parvati by using his third eye
future throws will be). She is
o know how he, a great god, can
t at a measly game of dice with
g of this myth is that Shiva, by
cheat that he used to annihilate
demonstrating the absurdity of
between things in the world.

Compelling 11th-century Nolamba Dynasty bron
shows Shiva teaching and Parvati listening to h

Another frequent source of quarrels in the myths is Shiva's propensity for bhang, a hemp-based drink that is taken all over India by peasants and princes alike. In a painting done in the Western Punjab Hills (p. 67), Shiva has drunk to excess and has fallen off his startled bull Nandi, who bolts away. Above on the hill, a stoic Parvati is flanked by Ganesh and Karttikeya, who points at his ridiculous father below.

When Shiva drinks bhang, Stella Kramrisch writes

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The Norton Simon Foundation, Pasadena

lord. The antelope leaping above Shiva's raised left hand is his highly complex, primordial symbol.

Los Angeles County Museum of Art

A 16th-century ceremonial headpiece of carved and painted wood represents Shiva in a terrorizing form.

Williams College Museum of Art

Anguished head of blind demon king, his body impaled on Shiva's trident, is from Orissa, 11th century.

in the exhibition catalog, "he rebukes Parvati for no fault of hers, sells all her clothes and ornaments to buy more bhang, and tells her that a wife is fortunate whose husband takes bhang, because when she becomes angry and scolds him he usually does not mind." Eventually, though, Parvati gets fed up and returns to her parents' home, but the sages intervene and bring about a reconciliation. "Shiva hugs his beloved so violently that he becomes one with her."

The form of Shiva known as Ardhanarishvara (literally, the lord who is half female) is represented in art exactly according to definition. A tenth-century Chola Dynasty granite image (p. 62), sent to the exhibition by the Government Museum, Madras, shows an androgynous figure, the left half male, the right half female. Ultimately, the continual quarrels between Shiva and Parvati are a metaphor for the inseparable nature of the male and female within the god Shiva.

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Philadelphia Museum of Art

Shiva's face lights up with a rare smile on terra-cotta head from the Gupta period, fifth or sixth century.

Just as before creation there must be destruction, so too before reconciliation there must be discord, as seemingly opposite behavior becomes part of a larger cyclical whole.

When Shiva assumes his fierce aspect he is called Bhairava, and he embodies all that is associated with death, destruction and decay—all things that come with time. A 16th-century ceremonial headpiece from Kerala, on India's southwest coast (p. 65) translates Bhairava's ferocity into an ordered vision of the horrific, with three bulging eyes, curved fangs and a frame of hooded snakes. Also in the exhibition is a superlative 11th-century head, once part of a sculptural panel on a Rajasthan temple, that eloquently illustrates Shiva's awesome power as destroyer (p. 65). It is the blind demon king Andhaka, who unwisely had lusted after Parvati. Impaled on an enraged Shiva's trident, he cries out in unbearable agony.

Because Hindus see destruction as a necessary counterpart of creation, they confront the darker side of life with a directness often unnerving to people from other cultures. This can perhaps be witnessed best at Benares, the holiest city in India to worshipers of Shiva, who flock there to feel the god's presence, to bathe (and thus purify themselves) in the Ganges River, to pray and to die. Joseph Dye remembers how the city affected him the first time he arrived there: "I was riding in a cab, and the streets were jammed with people, cattle, rickshaws; and all the movement was going toward the river. There was a rickshaw in front of me. Right across the back of it was a corpse, and a bicycler pedaling it down to the river to be burned . . . there's a strange atmosphere; a constant jumble going on, constant melee, constant shifting; yet it's almost as though it's in slow motion."

~~The tremendous diversity of Hindu life is captured by the superb exhibition in Philadelphia. And like Hindu art itself, "Manifestations of Shiva" can be enjoyed at numerous levels. Whatever one's interest, it will be sated with a combination of artworks, introductory text, catalog, film and supporting scholarly material. The works have been grouped together by medium, beginning with the paintings, hung like colorful gems in a series of intimate rooms. The stone sculptures are dramatically spotlighted in a large, dark area. The highlight of the bronzes, which come last, are three elegant Natarajas, an image familiar to many Westerners in which Shiva, surrounded by flames, dances the world into and out of existence.~~

~~Elsewhere in the museum an hour-long movie entitled *Shiva*, filmed by Malcolm Leigh and produced by the Asia Society, is shown daily. After a short, three-minute narrative introduction, it weaves together musical and visual passages—drawn from diverse segments of everyday life in India—illustrating the endlessly repeating cycles of creation and destruction so fundamental to the Hindu view of existence. As an introduction to the topic, Joseph Dye has written a paperback book, *Ways to Shiva*. Stella Kramrisch prepared the exhaustive catalog. Finally, for those with scholarly bent, her research is being published (*The Presence of Śiva*, Princeton University Press).~~

While it may be true, as Stella Kramrisch points out, that Shiva is a great god who transcends all categories and embodies all paradoxes, one still might ask: does that give him the right to cheat, get drunk, play tricks on his fiancee's mother? "Shiva is a wild god, always a wild god . . . " says Dr. Kramrisch. "He's completely despicable from the point of view of established society." It may well be that even among the gods sometimes the most outrageous ones are the most compelling.

A god with a streak of madness, Shiva, intoxi
on bhang, tumbles off his faithful bull, N
Calmly sniffing a flower, Parvati watches from
with children Ganesh (right) and Kartt

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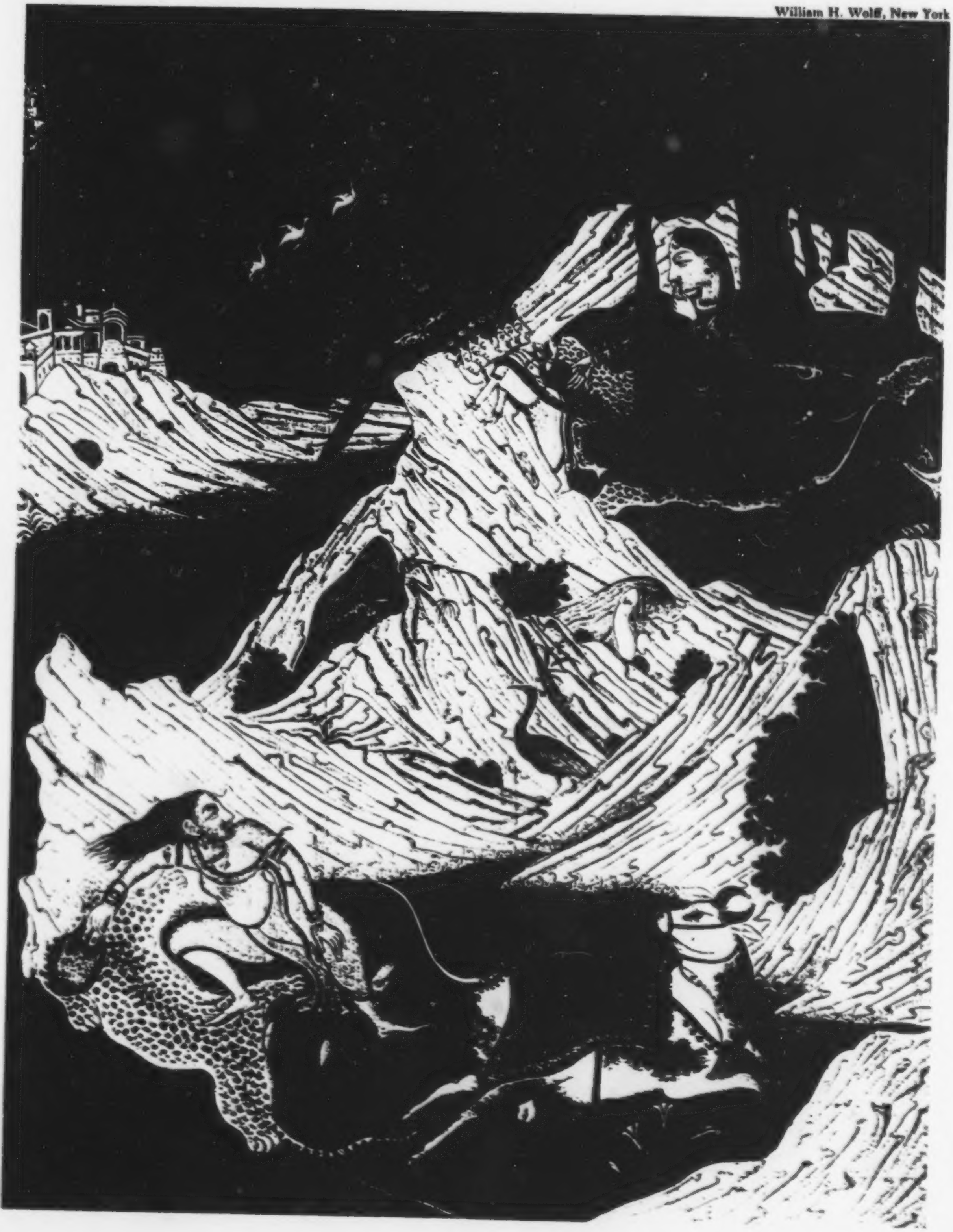
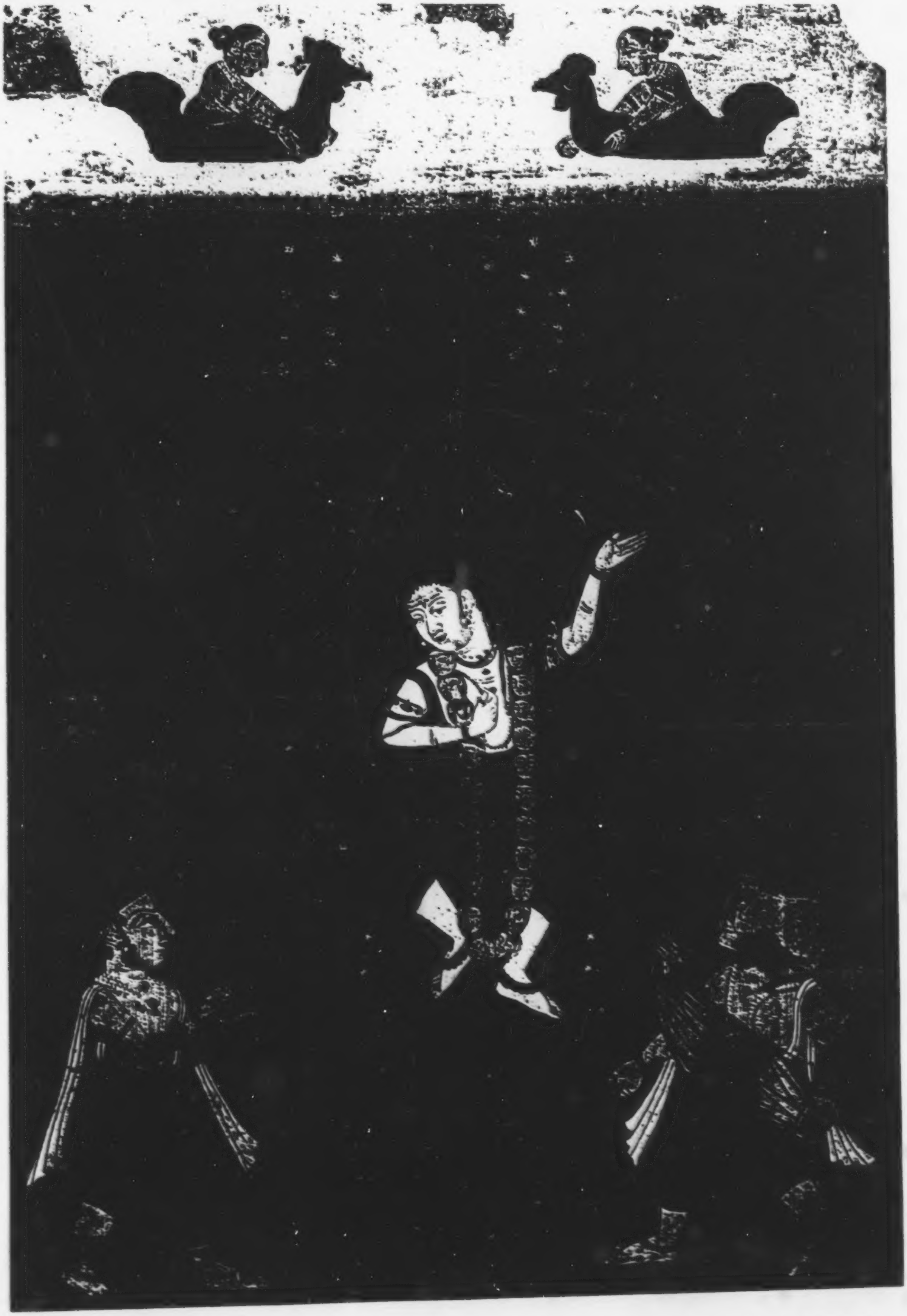


William H. Wolff, New York



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Bhakti Poetry

Sources of Indian Tradition. Ainslie T. Embree, ed. New York: Columbia University Press, 1988.

Most bhakti poetry is essentially love poetry from a devotee to his or her chosen deity. It is very personal and often uses the imagery of romantic love. Favorite themes include the sweetness of being with the god or the sadness of being apart. The poet-saints of India included men and women from all levels of Hindu society. Such "saints" grouped themselves around devotion to their god rather than according to the customs and traditions of conventional Hindu society. In this way, the bhakti movement served to challenge and erode some of the divisions of caste and gender within Hinduism. Often, little is known of the early bhakti poets' lives.

Shiva Bhakti

Mahadevi was a twelfth century queen in southern India who was utterly devoted to Shiva.

I love the Handsome One:
    he has no death
    decay nor form
    no place or side
    no end nor birthmarks.
    I love him, O mother, Listen
I love the Beautiful One
    with no bond nor fear
    no clan no land
    no landmarks
    for his beauty.
So my lord, white as jasmine, is my husband.
Take these husbands who die,
    decay, and feed them
    to your kitchen fires!
Better than meeting
    and mating all the time
    is the pleasure of mating once
    after being far apart.
When he's away
    I cannot wait
    to get a glimpse of him.
Friend, when will I have it
    both ways,
    be with Him
    yet not with Him,
    my lord white as jasmine?

Krishna Bhakti

"Of all the Hindi poets..., Mirabai is probably the one whose songs are still most often sung. Mirabai apparently was born about 1550 and, according to the legends, was the wife of a Rajput prince. Before her marriage, however, she had fallen in love with the Dark Lord, Krishna, and she refused to consummate her marriage. Defying all the conventions governing the place of women in Rajput society, she associated with male mendicants who were followers of Krishna....Mirabai may have been in fact the outcaste and breaker of taboos that the legends picture, but the social function of the legends and songs was to permit people to live outwardly perfectly ordinary lives, conforming to all the customs of family and caste, while living inner lives of existential love, freed from all conventions. Both men and women use Mira's songs, and those of other unconventional saints, to express a love for Krishna, that,through the metaphor of sexual union with him, brings release from the pains and burdens of life."

I'm colored with the color of dusk, O Rana (Mirabai's father-in-law's title)
colored with the color of my Lord.
Drumming out the rhythm on the drums, I danced,
dancing in the presence of the saints,
colored with the color of my Lord.
They thought me mad for the Wily One,
raw for my dear dark love,
colored with the color of my Lord.
The Rana sent me a poison cup:
I didn't look, I drank it up,
colored with the color of my Lord.
The clever Mountain Lifter is the Lord of Mira.
Life after life he's true --
colored with the color of my Lord.

Devi Bhakti

"The dates of Ramprasad (1718 to 1775) are a reminder of the continuity of the great medieval bhakti tradition and of its importance in the ongoing life of India. His songs, written in Bengali, express his sense of the overmastering power of the Goddess and of his need for her, even as he fears her. Ramprasad identified the Goddess not only with Radha (Krishna's consort), Krishna, Shiva, and Kali ...but also with Moses and Jesus. This suggests intellectual links witht the idea of the harmony of all religions, an idea that became a dominant theme in India in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries...."

O Mother Kali! You became a beautiful dancer in a circle of dancing
        milkmaids at Vrindavan.
Your mantras are different; your sports are various.
        Who comprehends this mystery?

Accomplished Radha is half your body; you had long, loose hair;
Now your hair is tied in a knot; now you have a flute in your hand.
O Kali! You danced in a sea of blood, now you are fond of the waters of
        the Jumna.
Prasada laughs, immersed in inner bliss, and says,
O Mother, I have fathomed the mystery after deep reflection:
Krishna, Kali, and Shiva -- all are one -- I have known, O Lady.

O Tara, doer of good, the good of all, the grantor of safety,
        O Mother, grant me safety.
O Mother Kali, take me in your arms; O Mother Kali,
        Take me in your arms.
O Mother, come now as Tara with a smiling face,
        Clad in white.
O Mother, terrific Kali, I have worshiped you alone so long.
My worship is finished. Now, O Mother, bring down your sword.

Basic Hindu Iconography

Shiva (consort = Parvati)

-long matted hair, often blowing wildly: reminds that Shiva is an ascetic; may also be snakes in an almost Medusan way as Shiva is associated with snakes!

-third eye: symbol of omniscience.

-trident (and sometimes a battle axe as well): symbolic of Shiva's power and his combative/aggressive nature.

-animal skin clothing: Shiva is lord of the animals and is also associated with death.

-presence of Nandi the bull: his "vehicle."

-agni, the fire: symbolic of Shiva's role as "the destroyer," but also of the fire as purifier/refiner.

-damaru, the hand drum: represents the sound of primordial creation and reminds of Shiva's role as recreator.

-crescent moon in his coiffure: reminds of the cyclic nature of time and of the myth in which the moon goddess fell to earth, landing in the Himalayas, Shiva's home, the site becoming the source of the Ganges.

-lingam: non-anthropomorphic symbol; reminds of Shiva's potency and sexual appetite, and when situated in a yoni, a half-pear-shaped vessel, a reminder of Shiva's dual nature (Destroyer-Recreator; male-female) unified as one.

Vishnu (many avatars; Krishna and Rama are most popular. Several others are not anthropomorphic. Consort = Laksme, Goddess of Fortune, Abundance).

-four arms: symbolizes his power, his ability to do many things at once. His usual role is to restore order to earth and human existence.

-conch shell: a war trumpet; spiral form also reminds of the origin and nature of existence.

-war discus: another power symbol, and also a symbol of the wheel of rebirth.

-lotus: symbolic of purity, transcendance, the promise of rebirth, Vishnu often sits on a lotus throne.

-war mace: again, a symbol of power and authority

-presence of Garuda, mythical half-man/half-bird: his "vehicle."

The Goddess (Devi or Mahadevi, the embodied female principle, shakti; usually as Durga; in her most extreme forms as Kali or Chamunda).

-many arms (12, 14, 16, or 18!): symbolic of her power which derives from the embodiment of the female principle, shakti; in her hands, she hold the preferred weapons of the other gods who created her, thus Shiva's trident, Vishnu's discus.

-rhyton: for drinking the blood of the demons she has slain!

-presence of a water buffalo: reminds of the myth of her creation by the gods to destroy Mahisha, a demon in the water buffalo's body.

-beautiful face, typically voluptuous body (very ample breasts, slender waist, broad thighs): reminds of her ability to conquer with beauty and charm as well as with the fury of her energy.

Assorted Terms

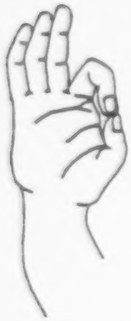
maya: "illusion"; the mistaken notion that what human senses perceive as real is in fact transitory, subject to rebirth and redeath.

prana: "breath" or "life"; it gives the fullness to most Buddhist and Hindu sculpture as it bursts forth from the physical body.

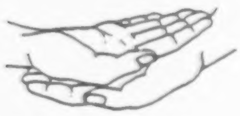
samsara: the cycle of rebirth, life, and redeath; also refers to the transitory nature of the physical world.

tribhanga: refers to the thrice-bent standing posture in which the head, chest, and lower body are not in alignment, but are at angles in three different directions from the vertical.

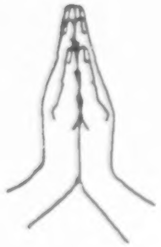
MUDRAS



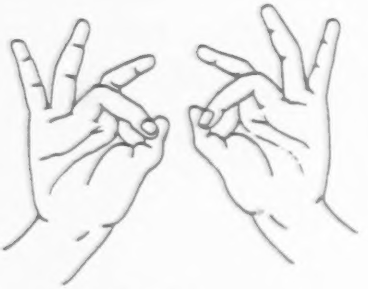
teaching



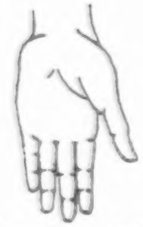
meditation



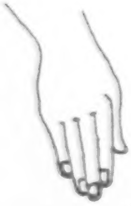
prayer



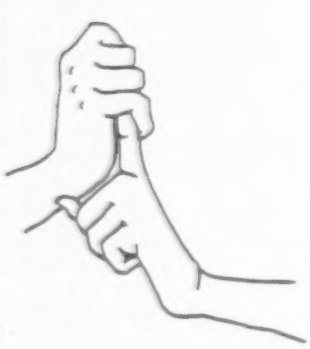
discussion



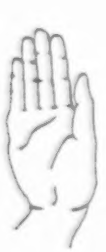
conferring grace,
granting a wish



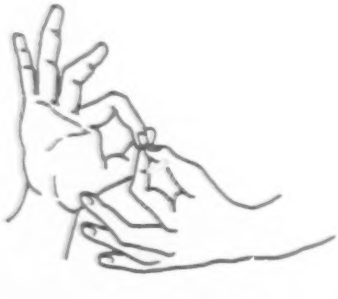
touching the earth
(testifying to merit in
previous lives in
Buddhism)



Knowledge



"fear not" or protection



teaching the law (of samsara)

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Shakuntala

by Kalidasa

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

DUSHYANTA: *King of India.*
MÁTHAVYA: *the Jester, friend and companion of the King.*
KANWA: *chief of the Hermits, foster-father of Śakoontalá.*
ŚÁRNGARAVA, ŚÁRADWATA: *two Bráhmans, belonging to the hermitage of Kanwa.*
MITRÁVASU: *brother-in-law of the King, and Superintendent of the city police.*
JÁNUKA, SÚCHAKA: *two constables.*
VÁTÁYANA: *the Chamberlain or attendant on the women's apartments.*
SOMARÁTA: *the domestic Priest.*
KARABHAKA: *a messenger of the Queen-mother.*
RAIVATAKA: *the warder or door-keeper.*
MÁTALI: *charioteer of Indra.*
SARVA-DAMANA: *afterwards Bharata, a little boy, son of Dushyanta by Śakoontalá.*
KAŚYAPA: *a divine sage, progenitor of men and gods, son of Maríchi and grandson of Brahmá.*
ŚAKOONTALÁ: *daughter of the sage Viśwámitra and the nymph Menaká, foster-child of the hermit Kanwa.*
PRIYAMVADÁ and ANASÚYÁ: *female attendants, companions of Śakoontalá.*
GAUTAMÍ: *a holy matron, Superior of the female inhabitants of the hermitage.*
VASUMATÍ: *the Queen of Dushyanta.*
SÁNUMATÍ: *a nymph, friend of Śakoontalá.*
TARALIKÁ: *personal attendant of the King.*
CHATURIKÁ: *personal attendant of the Queen.*
VETRAVATÍ: *female warder, or door-keeper.*
PARABARITIKÁ and MADHUKARIKÁ: *maidens in charge of the royal gardens.*
SUVRATÁ: *a nurse.*
ADITI: *wife of Kaśyapa; grand-daughter of Brahmá, through her father, Daksha.*
CHARIOTEER, FISHERMAN, OFFICERS, and HERMITS.

PROLOGUE

Benediction

Iśa preserve you! he who is revealed
In these eight forms by man perceptible—
Water, of all creation's works the first;
The fire that bears on high the sacrifice

A Treasury of Asian Literature. John D. Yohannon, ed. New York: Penguin Books, 1984.

Presented with solemnity to heaven;
The Priest, the holy offerer of gifts;
The Sun and Moon, those two majestic orbs,
Eternal marshallers of day and night;
The subtle Ether, vehicle of sound,
Diffused throughout the boundless universe;
The Earth, by sages called "The place of birth
Of all material essences and things";
And Air, which giveth life to all that breathe.

STAGE-MANAGER [*after the recitation of the benediction, looking towards the tiring-room*]: Lady, when you have finished attiring yourself, come this way.

ACTRESS [*entering*]: Here I am, Sir; what are your commands?

STAGE-MANAGER: We are here before the eyes of an audience of educated and discerning men; and have to represent in their presence a new drama composed by Kálidása, called "Śakoontalá, or the Lost Ring." Let the whole company exert themselves to do justice to their several parts.

ACTRESS: You, Sir, have so judiciously managed the cast of the characters, that nothing will be defective in the acting.

STAGE-MANAGER: Lady, I will tell you the exact state of the case.

No skill in acting can I deem complete,
Till from the wise the actor gain applause:
Know that the heart e'en of the truly skilful,
Shrinks from too boastful confidence in self.

ACTRESS [*modestly*]: You judge correctly. And now, what are your commands?

STAGE-MANAGER: What can you do better than engage the attention of the audience by some captivating melody?

ACTRESS: Which among the seasons shall I select as the subject of my song?

STAGE-MANAGER: You surely ought to give the preference to the present Summer season that has but recently commenced, a season so rich in enjoyment. For now

Unceasing are the charms of halcyon days,
When the cool bath exhilarates the frame;
When sylvan gales are laden with the scent
Of fragrant Pátalas; when soothing sleep
Creeps softly on beneath the deepening shade;
And when, at last, the dulcet calm of eve
Entrancing steals o'er every yielding sense.

ACTRESS: I will.

Fond maids, the chosen of their hearts to please,
Entwine their ears with sweet Sirísha flowers,

Whose fragrant lips attract the kiss of bees
That softly murmur through the summer hours.

STAGE-MANAGER: Charmingly sung! The audience are motionless as statues, their souls riveted by the enchanting strain. What subject shall we select for representation, that we may insure a continuance of their favor?

ACTRESS: Why not the same, Sir, announced by you at first? Let the drama called "Sakoontalá, or the Lost Ring," be the subject of our dramatic performance.

STAGE-MANAGER: Rightly reminded! For the moment I had forgotten it.

Your song's transporting melody decoyed
My thoughts, and rapt with ecstasy my soul;
As now the bounding antelope allures
The King Dushyanta on the chase intent. [*Exeunt.*

ACT FIRST

Scene—A Forest

Enter King Dushyanta, armed with a bow and arrow, in a chariot, chasing an antelope, attended by his Charioteer.

CHARIOTEER [*looking at the deer, and then at the King*]: Great Prince,

When on the antelope I bend my gaze,
And on your Majesty, whose mighty bow
Has its string firmly braced; before my eyes
The god that wields the trident seems revealed,
Chasing the deer that flies from him in vain.

KING: Charioteer, this fleet antelope has drawn us far from my attendants. See! there he runs:—

Aye and anon his graceful neck he bends
To cast a glance at the pursuing car;
And dreading now the swift-descending shaft,
Contracts into itself his slender frame:
About his path, in scattered fragments strewn,
The half-chewed grass falls from his panting mouth;
See! in his airy bounds he seems to fly,
And leaves no trace upon th' elastic turf. [*With astonishment.*

How now! swift as is our pursuit, I scarce can see him.

CHARIOTEER: Sire, the ground here is full of hollows; I have therefore drawn in the reins and checked the speed of the chariot. Hence the deer has somewhat gained upon us. Now that we are passing over level ground, we shall have no difficulty in overtaking him.

KING: Loosen the reins, then.

CHARIOTEER: The King is obeyed. [*Drives the chariot at full speed.*]

Great Prince, see! see!
Responsive to the slackened rein, the steeds
Chafing with eager rivalry, career
With emulative fleetness o'er the plain;
Their necks outstretched, their waving plumes, that late
Fluttered above their brows, are motionless;
Their sprightly ears, but now erect, bent low;
Themselves unsullied by the circling dust,
That vainly follows on their rapid course.

KING [*joyously*]: In good sooth, the horses seem as if they would outstrip the steeds of Indra and the Sun.[1]

That which but now showed to my view minute
Quickly assumes dimension; that which seemed
A moment since disjoined in diverse parts,
Looks suddenly like one compacted whole;
That which is really crooked in its shape
In the far distance left, grows regular;
Wondrous the chariot's speed, that in a breath,
Makes the near distant and the distant near.

Now, Charioteer, see me kill the deer. [*Takes aim.*

A VOICE [*behind the scenes*]: Hold, O King! this deer belongs to our hermitage. Kill it not! kill it not!

CHARIOTEER [*listening and looking*]: Great King, some hermits have stationed themselves so as to screen the antelope at the very moment of its coming within range of your arrow.

KING [*hastily*]: Then stop the horses.

CHARIOTEER: I obey. [*Stops the chariot.*

Enter a Hermit, and two others with him.

HERMIT [*raising his hand*]: This deer, O King, belongs to our hermitage. Kill it not! kill it not!

Now heaven forbid this barbèd shaft descend
Upon the fragile body of a fawn,
Like fire upon a heap of tender flowers!
Can thy steel bolts no meeter quarry find
Than the warm life-blood of a harmless deer?
Restore, great Prince, thy weapon to its quiver;
More it becomes thy arms to shield the weak,
Than to bring anguish on the innocent.

KING: 'Tis done. [*Replaces the arrow in its quiver.*

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[1] The speed of the chariot resembled that of the wind and the sun. Indra was the god of the firmament or atmosphere. The sun, in Hindoo mythology, is represented as seated in a chariot drawn by seven green horses, having before him a lovely youth without legs, who acts as charioteer, and who is Aruna, or the Dawn personified.

HERMIT: Worthy is this action of a Prince, the light of Puru's race.

Well does this act befit a Prince like thee,
Right worthy is it of thine ancestry.
Thy guerdon be a son of peerless worth,
Whose wide dominion shall embrace the earth.

BOTH THE OTHER HERMITS [*raising their hands*] : May heaven indeed grant thee a son, a sovereign of the earth from sea to sea!

KING [*bowing*] : I accept with gratitude a Bráhman's benediction.

HERMIT: We came hither, mighty Prince, to collect sacrificial wood. Here on the banks of the Máliní you may perceive the hermitage of the great sage Kanwa. If other duties require not your presence, deign to enter and accept our hospitality.

When you behold our penitential rites
Performed without impediment by Saints
Rich only in devotion, then with pride
Will you reflect, Such are the holy men
Who call me Guardian; such the men for whom
To wield the bow I bare my nervous arm,
Scarred by the motion of the glancing string.

KING: Is the Chief of your Society now at home?

HERMIT: No; he has gone to Soma-tírtha to propitiate Destiny, which threatens his daughter Sakoontalá with some calamity; but he has commissioned her in his absence to entertain all guests with hospitality.

KING: Good! I will pay her a visit. She will make me acquainted with the mighty sage's acts of penance and devotion.

HERMIT: And we will depart on our errand. [*Exit with his companions.*

KING: Charioteer, urge on the horses. We will at least purify our souls by a sight of this hallowed retreat.

CHARIOTEER: Your Majesty is obeyed.

[*Drives the chariot with great velocity.*

KING [*looking all about him*]: Charioteer, even without being told, I should have known that these were the precincts of a grove consecrated to penitential rites.

CHARIOTEER: How so?

KING: Do not you observe?

Beneath the trees, whose hollow trunks afford
Secure retreat to many a nestling brood
Of parrots, scattered grains of rice lie strewn.
Lo! here and there are seen the polished slabs
That serve to bruise the fruit of Ingudí

The gentle roe-deer, taught to trust in man,
Unstartled hear our voices. On the paths
Appear the traces of bark-woven vests
Borne dripping from the limpid fount of waters.
And mark!
Laved are the roots of trees by deep canals,
Whose glassy waters tremble in the breeze;
The sprouting verdure of the leaves is dimmed
By dusky wreaths of upward curling smoke
From burnt oblations; and on new-mown lawns
Around our car graze leisurely the fawns.

CHARIOTEER: I observe it all.

KING [*advancing a little further*]: The inhabitants of this sacred retreat must not be disturbed. Stay the chariot, that I may alight.

CHARIOTEER: The reins are held in. Your Majesty may descend.

KING [*alighting*]: Charioteer, groves devoted to penance must be entered in humble attire. Take these ornaments. [*Delivers his ornaments and bow to the Charioteer.*] Charioteer, see that the horses are watered, and attend to them until I return from visiting the inhabitants of the hermitage.

CHARIOTEER: I will. [*Exit.*

KING [*walking and looking about*]:Here is the entrance to the hermitage. I will now go in.

[*Entering he feels a throbbing sensation in his arm.*

Serenest peace is in this calm retreat,
By passion's breath unruffled; what portends
My throbbing arm? Why should it whisper here
Of happy love? Yet everywhere around us
Stand the closed portals of events unknown.

A VOICE [*behind the scenes*]: This way, my dear companions; this way.

KING [*listening*]:Hark! I hear voices to the right of yonder grove of trees. I will walk in that direction. [*Walking and looking about.*]

Ah! here are the maidens of the hermitage coming this way to water the shrubs, carrying watering-pots proportioned to their strength. [*Gazing at them.*] How graceful they look!

In palaces such charms are rarely ours;
The woodland plants outshine the garden flowers.

I will conceal myself in this shade and watch them.

[*Stands gazing at them.*

Enter Sakoontalá, with her two female companions, employed in the manner described.

ŚAKOONTALÁ: This way, my dear companions; this way.

ANASÚYA: Dear Śakoontalá, one would think that Father Kanwa had more affection for the shrubs of the hermitage even than for you, seeing he assigns to you who are yourself as delicate as the fresh-blown jasmine, the task of filling with water the trenches which encircle their roots.

ŚAKOONTALÁ: Dear Anasúyá, although I am charged by my good father with this duty, yet I cannot regard it as a task. I really feel a sisterly love for these plants. [*Continues watering the shrubs.*

KING: Can this be the daughter of Kanwa? The saintly man, though descended from the great Kaśyapa, must be very deficient in judgment to habituate such a maiden to the life of a recluse.

The sage who would this form of artless grace
Inure to penance—thoughtlessly attempts
To cleave in twain the hard acacia's stem
With the soft edge of a blue lotus leaf.

Well! concealed behind this tree, I will watch her without raising her suspicions. [*Conceals himself.*

ŚAKOONTALÁ: Good. Anasúyá, Priyamvadá has drawn this bark-dress too tightly about my chest. I pray thee, loosen it a little.

ANASÚYÁ: I will [*Loosens it.*

PRIYAMVADÁ [*smiling*]: Why do you lay the blame on me? Blame rather your own blooming youthfulness which imparts fulness to your bosom.

KING: A most just observation!

This youthful form, whose bosom's swelling charms
By the bark's knotted tissue are concealed,
Like some fair bud close folded in its sheath,
Gives not to view the blooming of its beauty.

But what am I saying? In real truth, this bark-dress, though ill-suited to her figure, sets it off like an ornament.

The lotus with the Saivala entwined
Is not a whit less brilliant: dusky spots
Heighten the lustre of the cold-rayed moon:
This lovely maiden in her dress of bark
Seems all the lovelier. E'en the meanest garb
Gives to true beauty fresh attractiveness.

ŚAKOONTALÁ [*looking before her*]: Yon Keśara-tree beckons to me with its young shoots, which, as the breeze waves them to and fro, appear like slender figures. I will go and attend to it. [*Walks towards it.*

PRIYAMVADÁ: Dear Śakoontalá, prithee, rest in that attitude one moment.

ŚAKOONTALÁ: Why so?

PRIYAMVADÁ: The Kesara-tree, whilst your graceful form bends about its stem, appears as if it were wedded to some lovely twining creeper.

ŚAKOONTALÁ: Ah! saucy girl, you are most appropriately named Priyamvadá ("Speaker of flattering things").

KING: What Priyamvadá says, though complimentary, is nevertheless true. Verily,

Her ruddy lip vies with the opening bud;
Her graceful arms are as the twining stalks;
And her whole form is radiant with the glow
Of youthful beauty, as the tree with bloom.

ANASÚYÁ: See, dear Śakoontalá, here is the young jasmine, which you named "the Moonlight of the Grove," the self-elected wife of the mango-tree. Have you forgotten it?

ŚAKOONTALÁ: Rather will I forget myself. [*Approaching the plant and looking at it.*] How delightful is the season when the jasmine-creeper and the mango-tree seem thus to unite in mutual embraces! The fresh blossoms of the jasmine resemble the bloom of a young bride, and the newly-formed shoots of the mango appear to make it her natural protector. [*Continues gazing at it.*

PRIYAMVADÁ [*smiling*] : Do you know, my Anasúyá, why Śakoontalá gazes so intently at the jasmine?

ANASÚYÁ: No, indeed, I cannot imagine. I pray thee tell me.

PRIYAMVADÁ: She is wishing that as the jasmine is united to a suitable tree, so, in like manner, she may obtain a husband worthy of her.

ŚAKOONTALÁ: Speak for yourself, girl; this is the thought in your own mind. [*Continues watering the flowers.*

KING: Would that my union with her were permissible! and yet I hardly dare hope that the maiden is sprung from a caste different from that of the Head of the hermitage. But away with doubt:

That she is free to wed a warrior-king
My heart attests. For, in conflicting doubts,
The secret promptings of the good man's soul
Are an unerring index of the truth.

However, come what may, I will ascertain the fact.

ŚAKOONTALÁ [*in a flurry*]: Ah! a bee, disturbed by the sprinkling of the water, has left the young jasmine, and is trying to settle on my face. [*Attempts to drive it away.*

KING [*gazing at her ardently*]: Beautiful! there is something charming even in her repulse.

Where'er the bee his eager onset plies,
Now here, now there, she darts her kindling eyes:

What love hath yet to teach, fear teaches now,
The furtive glances and the frowning brow. [*In a tone of envy.*

Ah happy bee! how boldly dost thou try
To steal the lustre from her sparkling eye;
And in thy circling movements hover near,
To murmur tender secrets in her ear;
Or, as she coyly waves her hand, to sip
Voluptuous nectar from her lower lip!
While rising doubts my heart's fond hopes destroy,
Thou dost the fulness of her charms enjoy.

ŚAKOONTALÁ: This impertinent bee will not rest quiet. I must move elsewhere. [*Moving a few steps off, and casting a glance around.*] How now! he is following me here. Help! my dear friends, help! deliver me from the attacks of this troublesome insect.

PRIYAMVADÁ AND ANASÚYÁ: How can we deliver you? Call Dushyanta to your aid. The sacred groves are under the king's special protection.

KING: An excellent opportunity for me to show myself. Fear not—[*Checks himself when the words are half-uttered. Aside.*] But stay, if I introduce myself in this manner, they will know me to be the King. Be it so, I will accost them, nevertheless.

ŚAKOONTALÁ [*moving a step or two further off*]: What! it still persists in following me.

KING [*advancing hastily*]: When mighty Puru's offspring sways the earth,
And o'er the wayward holds his threatening rod,
Who dares molest the gentle maids that keep
Their holy vigils here in Kanwa's grove?

[*All look at the King, and are embarrassed.*

ANASÚYÁ: Kind Sir, no outrage has been committed; only our dear friend here was teased by the attacks of a troublesome bee. [*Points to Śakoontalá.*

KING [*turning to Śakoontalá*]: I trust all is well with your devotional rites? [*Śákoontalá stands confused and silent.*

ANASÚYÁ: All is well, indeed, now that we are honored by the reception of a distinguished guest. Dear Sakoontalá, go, bring from the hermitage an offering of flowers, rice, and fruit. This water that we have brought with us will serve to bathe our guest's feet.

KING: The rites of hospitality are already performed; your truly kind words are the best offering I can receive.

PRIYAMVADÁ: At least be good enough, gentle Sir, to sit down awhile, and rest yourself on this seat shaded by the leaves of the Saptaparna tree.

KING: You, too, must all be fatigued by your employment.

ANASÚYÁ: Dear Śakoontalá, there is no impropriety in our sitting by the side of our guest: come, let us sit down here. [*All sit down together.*

ŚAKOONTALÁ [*aside*]: How is it that the sight of this man has made me sensible of emotions inconsistent with religious vows?

KING [*gazing at them all by turns*]: How charmingly your friendship is in keeping with the equality of your ages and appearance!

PRIYAMVADÁ [*aside to Anasúyá*]: Who can this person be, whose lively yet dignified manner, and polite conversation, bespeak him a man of high rank?

ANASÚYÁ: I too, my dear, am very curious to know. I will ask him myself. [*Aloud.*] Your kind words, noble Sir, fill me with confidence, and prompt me to inquire of what regal family our noble guest is the ornament? what country is now mourning his absence? and what induced a person so delicately nurtured to expose himself to the fatigue of visiting this grove of penance?

ŚAKOONTALÁ [*aside*]: Be not troubled, O my heart, Anasúyá is giving utterance to thy thoughts.

KING [*aside*]: How now shall I reply? shall I make myself known, or shall I still disguise my real rank? I have it; I will answer her thus. [*Aloud.*] I am the person charged by his majesty, the descendant of Puru, with the administration of justice and religion; and am come to this sacred grove to satisfy myself that the rites of the hermits are free from obstruction.

ANASÚYÁ: The hermits, then, and all the members of our religious society have now a guardian.

[*Śakoontalá gazes bashfully at the King.*

PRIYAMVADÁ AND ANASÚYÁ [*perceiving the state of her feelings, and of the King's. Aside to Śakoontalá*]: Dear Śakoontalá, if father Kanwa were but at home to-day—

ŚAKOONTALÁ [*angrily*]: What if he were?

PRIYAMVADÁ AND ANASÚYÁ: He would honor this our distinguished guest with an offering of the most precious of his possessions.

ŚAKOONTALÁ: Go to! you have some silly idea in your minds. I will not listen to such remarks.

KING: May I be allowed, in my turn, to ask you maidens a few particulars respecting your friend?

PRIYAMVADÁ AND ANASÚYÁ: Your request, Sir, is an honor.

KING: The sage Kanwa lives in the constant practice of austerities. How, then, can this friend of yours be called his daughter?

ANASÚYÁ: I will explain to you, Sir. You have heard of an illustrious sage of regal caste, Viśwámitra, whose family name is Kaúsika.

KING: I have.

ANASÚYÁ: Know that he is the real father of our friend. The venerable Kanwa is only her reputed father. He it was who brought her up, when she was deserted by her mother.

KING: "Deserted by her mother!" My curiosity is excited; pray let me hear the story from the beginning.

ANASÚYÁ: You shall hear it, Sir. Some time since, this sage of regal caste, while performing a most severe penance on the banks of the river Godávarí, excited the jealousy and alarm of the gods; insomuch that they despatched a lovely nymph named Menaká to interrupt his devotions.

KING: The inferior gods, I am aware, are jealous of the power which the practice of excessive devotion confers on mortals.

ANASÚYÁ: Well, then, it happened that Viśwámitra, gazing on the bewitching beauty of that nymph at a season when, spring being in its glory—

[*Stops short, and appears confused.*

KING: The rest may be easily divined. Śakoontalá, then, is the offspring of the nymph.

ANASÚYÁ: Just so.

KING: It is quite intelligible.

How could a mortal to such charms give birth?
The lightning's radiance flashes not from earth.

[*Śakoontalá remains modestly seated with downcast eyes. Aside.* And so my desire has really scope for its indulgence. Yet I am still distracted by doubts, remembering the pleasantry of her female companions respecting her wish for a husband.

PRIYAMVADÁ [*looking with a smile at Śakoontalá, and then turning towards the King*]: You seem desirous, Sir, of asking something further.

[*Śakoontalá makes a chiding gesture with her finger.*

KING: You conjecture truly. I am so eager to hear the particulars of your friend's history, that I have still another question to ask.

PRIYAMVADÁ: Scruple not to do so. Persons who lead the life of hermits may be questioned unreservedly.

KING: I wish to ascertain one point respecting your friend—

Will she be bound by solitary vows
Opposed to love, till her espousals only?
Or ever dwell with these her cherished fawns,
Whose eyes, in lustre vieing with her own,
Return her gaze of sisterly affection?

PRIYAMVADÁ: Hitherto, Sir, she has been engaged in the practice of religious duties, and has lived in subjection to her foster-father; but it is now his fixed intention to give her away in marriage to a husband worthy of her.

KING [*aside*]: His intention may be easily carried into effect.

Be hopeful, O my heart, thy harrowing doubts
Are past and gone; that which thou didst believe
To be as unapproachable as fire,
Is found a glittering gem that may be touched.

ŚAKOONTALÁ [*pretending anger*]: Anasúyá, I shall leave you.

ANASÚYÁ: Why so?

ŚAKOONTALÁ: That I may go and report this impertinent Priyamvadá to the venerable matron, Gautamí.[2]

ANASÚYÁ: Surely, dear friend, it would not be right to leave a distinguished guest before he has received the rights of hospitality, and quit his presence in this wilful manner.

[*Sakoontalá, without answering a word, moves away.*

KING [*making a movement to arrest her departure, but checking himself. Aside*]: Ah! a lover's feelings betray themselves by his gestures.

When I would fain have stayed the maid, a sense
Of due decorum checked my bold design:
Though I have stirred not, yet my mien betrays
My eagerness to follow on her steps.

PRIYAMVADÁ [*holding Sakoontalá back*]: Dear Sakoontalá, it does not become you to go away in this manner.

ŚAKOONTALÁ [*frowning*]: Why not, pray?

PRIYAMVADÁ: You are under a promise to water two more shrubs for me. When you have paid your debt, you shall go, and not before. [*Forces her to turn back.*

KING: Spare her this trouble, gentle maiden. The exertion of watering the shrubs has already fatigued her.

The water-jar has overtasked the strength
Of her slim arms; her shoulders droop, her hands
Are ruddy with the glow of quickened pulses;
E'en now her agitated breath imparts
Unwonted tremor to her heaving breast;
The pearly drops that mar the recent bloom
Of the Sirísha pendant in her ear,
Gather in clustering circles on her cheek;
Loosed is the fillet of her hair: her hand
Restrains the locks that struggle to be free.

Suffer me, then, thus to discharge the debt for you.

[*Offers a ring to Priyamvadá. Both the maidens, reading the name Dushyanta on the seal, look at each other with surprise.*

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[2] The Matron or Superior of the female part of the society of hermits. Her authority resembled that of an abbess in a convent of nuns.

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KING: Nay, think not that I am King Dushyanta. I am only the king's officer, and this is the ring which I have received from him as my credentials.

PRIYAMVADÁ: The greater the reason you ought not to part with the ring from your finger. I am content to release her from her obligation at your simple request. [*With a smile.*] Now, Śakoontalá my love, you are at liberty to retire, thanks to the intercession of this noble stranger, or rather of this mighty prince.

ŚAKOONTALÁ [*aside*]: My movements are no longer under my own control. [*Aloud.*] Pray, what authority have you over me, either to send me away or keep me back?

KING [*gazing at Śakoontalá. Aside*]: Would I could ascertain whether she is affected towards me as I am towards her! At any rate, my hopes are free to indulge themselves. Because,

Although she mingles not her words with mine,
Yet doth her listening ear drink in my speech;
Although her eye shrinks from my ardent gaze,
No form but mine attracts its timid glances.

A VOICE [*behind the scenes*]: O hermits, be ready to protect the animals belonging to our hermitage. King Dushyanta, amusing himself with hunting, is near at hand.

Lo! by the feet of prancing horses raised,
Thick clouds of moving dust, like glittering swarms
Of locusts in the glow of eventide,
Fall on the branches of our sacred trees;
Where hang the dripping vests of woven bark,
Bleached by the waters of the cleansing fountain.
And see!
Scared by the royal chariot in its course,
With headlong haste an elephant invades
The hallowed precincts of our sacred grove;
Himself the terror of the startled deer,
And an embodied hindrance to our rites.
The hedge of creepers clinging to his feet,
Feeble obstruction to his mad career,
Is dragged behind him in a tangled chain;
And with terrific shock one tusk he drives
Into the riven body of a tree,
Sweeping before him all impediments.

KING [*aside*]: Out upon it! my retinue are looking for me, and are disturbing this holy retreat. Well! there is no help for it; I must go and meet them.

PRIYAMVADÁ AND ANASÚYÁ: Noble Sir, we are terrified by the accidental disturbance caused by the wild elephant. Permit us to return into the cottage.

VAILABLE

KING [*hastily*]: Go, gentle maidens. It shall be our care that no injury happen to the hermitage. [*All rise up.*

PRIYAMVADÁ AND ANASÚYÁ: After such poor hospitality we are ashamed to request the honor of a second visit from you.

KING: Say not so. The mere sight of you, sweet maidens, has been to me the best entertainment.

ŚAKOONTALÁ: Anasúyá, a pointed blade of Kuśa-grass[8] has pricked my foot; and my bark-mantle is caught in the branch of a Kuruvaka bush. Be so good as to wait for me until I have disentangled it.

[*Exit with her two companions, after making pretexts for delay, that she may steal glances at the King.*

KING: I have no longer any desire to return to the city. I will therefore rejoin my attendants, and make them encamp somewhere in the vicinity of this sacred grove. In good truth, Śakoontalá has taken such possession of my thoughts, that I cannot turn myself in any other direction.

My limbs drawn onward leave my heart behind,
Like silken pennon borne against the wind.

ACT SECOND

Scene—A Plain on the Skirts of the Forest

Enter the Jester, Máthavya, in a melancholy mood.

MÁTHAVYA [*sighing*]: Heigh-ho! what an unlucky fellow I am! worn to a shadow by my royal friend's sporting propensities. "Here's a deer!" "There goes a boar!" "Yonder's a tiger!" This is the only burden of our talk, while in the heat of the meridian sun we toil on from jungle to jungle, wandering about in the paths of the woods, where the trees afford us no shelter. Are we thirsty? We have nothing to drink but the foul water of some mountain stream, filled with dry leaves which give it a most pungent flavor. Are we hungry? We have nothing to eat but roast game, which we must swallow down at odd times, as best we can. Even at night there is no peace to be had. Sleeping is out of the question, with joints all strained by dancing attendance upon my sporting friend; or if I do happen to doze, I am awakened at the very earliest dawn by the horrible din of a lot of rascally beaters and huntsmen, who must needs surround the wood before sunrise, and deafen me with their clatter. Nor are these my only troubles. Here's a fresh grievance, like a new boil rising upon an old one! Yesterday, while we were lagging behind, my royal friend entered yonder hermitage after a deer; and there, as ill-luck would have it, caught sight of a beautiful girl, called Sakoontalá, the hermit's daughter. From that moment, not another thought about returning to the city! and all last night, not a wink of sleep did he get for thinking of the damsel. What is to be done? At any rate, I will be on the watch for him as soon as he has finished his toilet. [*Walking and looking about.*] Oh! here he comes, attended by the Yavana women with bows in their hands, and wearing garlands of wild flowers. What shall I do? I have it. I will pretend to stand in the easiest attitude for resting my bruised and crippled limbs. [*Stands leaning on a staff.*

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[8] A grass held sacred by the Hindoos and freely used at their religious ceremonies. Its leaves are very long and taper to a needle-like point.

Enter King Dushyanta, followed by a retinue in the manner described.

KING: True, by no easy conquest may I win her,
Yet are my hopes encouraged by her mien.
Love is not yet triumphant; but, methinks,
The hearts of both are ripe for his delights.
[*Smiling.*] Ah! thus does the lover delude himself; judging of the state of his loved one's feelings by his own desires. But yet,
The stolen glance with half-averted eye,
The hesitating gait, the quick rebuke
Addressed to her companion, who would fain
Have stayed her counterfeit departure; these
Are signs not unpropitious to my suit.
So eagerly the lover feeds his hopes,
Claiming each trivial gesture for his own.

MÁTHAVYA [*still in the same attitude*]: Ah, friend, my hands cannot move to greet you with the usual salutation. I can only just command my lips to wish your majesty victory.

KING: Why, what has paralyzed your limbs?

MÁTHAVYA: You might as well ask me how my eye comes to water after you have poked your finger into it.

KING: I don't understand you; speak more intelligibly.

MÁTHAVYA: Ah, my dear friend, is yonder upright reed transformed into a crooked plant by its own act, or by the force of the current?

KING: The current of the river causes it, I suppose.

MÁTHAVYA: Aye; just as you are the cause of my crippled limbs.

KING: How so?

MÁTHAVYA: Here are you living the life of a wild man of the woods in a savage, unfrequented region, while your state affairs are left to shift for themselves; and as for poor me, I am no longer master of my own limbs, but have to follow you about day after day in your chases after wild animals, till my bones are all crippled and out of joint. Do, my dear friend, let me have one day's rest.

KING [*aside*]: This fellow little knows, while he talks in this manner, that my mind is wholly engrossed by recollections of the hermit's daughter, and quite as disinclined to the chase as his own.

No longer can I bend my well-braced bow
Against the timid deer; nor e'er again
With well-aimed arrows can I think to harm
These her beloved associates, who enjoy
The privilege of her companionship;
Teaching her tender glances in return.

MÁTHAVYA [*looking in the King's face*]: I may as well speak to the winds, for any attention you pay to my requests. I suppose you have something on your mind, and are talking it over to yourself.

KING [*smiling*]: I was only thinking that I ought not to disregard a friend's request.

MÁTHAVYA: Then may the King live forever! [*Moves off.*

KING: Stay a moment, my dear friend. I have something else to say to you.

MÁTHAVYA: Say on, then.

KING: When you have rested, you must assist me in another business, which will give you no fatigue.

MÁTHAVYA: In eating something nice, I hope.

KING: You shall know at some future time.

MÁTHAVYA: No time better than the present.

KING: What ho! there.

WARDER [*entering*]: What are your Majesty's commands?

KING: O Raivataka! bid the General of the forces attend.

WARDER: I will, Sire. [*Exit and reënters with the General.*] Come forward, General; his Majesty is looking towards you, and has some order to give you.

GENERAL [*looking at the King*]: Though hunting is known to produce ill effects, my royal master has derived only benefit from it. For

Like the majestic elephant that roams
O'er mountain wilds, so does the King display
A stalwart frame, instinct with vigorous life.
His brawny arms and manly chest are scored

By frequent passage of the sounding string;
Unharmed he bears the mid-day sun; no toil
His mighty spirit daunts; his sturdy limbs,
Stripped of redundant flesh, relinquish nought
Of their robust proportions, but appear
In muscle, nerve, and sinewy fibre cased.

[*Approaching the King.*] Victory to the King! We have tracked the wild beasts to their lairs in the forest. Why delay, when everything is ready?

KING: My friend Máthavya here has been disparaging the chase, till he has taken away all my relish for it.

GENERAL [*aside to Máthavya*]: Persevere in your opposition, my good fellow; I will sound the King's real feelings, and humor him accordingly. [*Aloud.*] The blockhead talks nonsense, and your Majesty, in your own person, furnishes the best proof of it. Observe, Sire, the advantage and pleasure the hunter derives from the chase.

Freed from all grosser influences, his frame
Loses its sluggish humors, and becomes
Buoyant, compact, and fit for bold encounter.
'Tis his to mark with joy the varied passions,
Fierce heats of anger, terror, blank dismay,
Of forest animals that cross his path.
Then what a thrill transports the hunter's soul,
When, with unerring course, his driven shaft
Pierces the moving mark! Oh! 'tis conceit
In moralists to call the chase a vice;
What recreation can compare with this?

MÁTHAVYA [*angrily*]: Away! tempter, away! The King has recovered his senses, and is himself again. As for you, you may, if you choose, wander about from forest to forest, till some old bear seizes you by the nose, and makes a mouthful of you.

KING: My good General, as we are just now in the neighborhood of a consecrated grove, your panegyric upon hunting is somewhat ill-timed, and I cannot assent to all you have said. For the present,

All undisturbed the buffaloes shall sport
In yonder pool, and with their ponderous horns
Scatter its tranquil waters, while the deer,
Couched here and there in groups beneath the shade
Of spreading branches, ruminate in peace.
And all securely shall the herd of boars
Feed on the marshy sedge; and thou, my bow,
With slackened string enjoy a long repose.

GENERAL: So please your Majesty, it shall be as you desire.

KING: Recall, then, the beaters who were sent in advance to surround the forest. My troops must not be allowed to disturb this sacred retreat, and irritate its pious inhabitants.

Know that within the calm and cold recluse
Lurks unperceived a germ of smothered flame,
All-potent to destroy; a latent fire
That rashly kindled bursts with fury forth:—
As in the disc of crystal that remains
Cool to the touch, until the solar ray
Falls on its polished surface, and excites
The burning heat that lies within concealed.

GENERAL: Your Majesty's commands shall be obeyed.

MÁTHAVYA: Off with you, you son of a slave! Your nonsense won't go down here, my fine fellow. [*Exit General.*

KING [*looking at his attendants*]: Here, women, take my hunting-dress; and you, Raivataka, keep guard carefully outside. [*Exeunt.*

ATTENDANTS: We will, sire.

MÁTHAVYA: Now that you have got rid of these plagues, who have been buzzing about us like so many flies, sit down, do, on that stone slab, with the shade of the tree as your canopy, and I will seat myself by you quite comfortably.

KING: Go you, and sit down first.

MÁTHAVYA: Come along, then.

[*Both walk on a little way, and seat themselves.*

KING: Máthavya, it may be said of you that you have never beheld anything worth seeing: for your eyes have not yet looked upon the loveliest object in creation.

MÁTHAVYA: How can you say so, when I see your Majesty before me at this moment?

KING: It is very natural that everyone should consider his own friend perfect; but I was alluding to Śakoontalá, the brightest ornament of these hallowed groves.

MÁTHAVYA [*aside*]: I understand well enough, but I am not going to humor him. [*Aloud.*] If, as you intimate, she is a hermit's daughter, you cannot lawfully ask her in marriage.[4] You may as well, then, dismiss her from your mind, for any good the mere sight of her can do.

KING: Think you that a descendant of the mighty Puru could fix his affections on an unlawful object?

Though, as men say, the offspring of the sage,
The maiden to a nymph celestial owes
Her being, and by her mother left on earth,
Was found and nurtured by the holy man
As his own daughter, in this hermitage;—

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[4] The king must marry within the warrior caste. [Ed.]

So, when dissevered from its parent stalk,
Some falling blossom of the jasmine, wafted
Upon the sturdy sunflower, is preserved
By its support from premature decay.

MÁTHAVYA [*smiling*]: This passion of yours for a rustic maiden, when you have so many gems of women at home in your palace, seems to me very like the fancy of a man who is tired of sweet dates, and longs for sour tamarinds as a variety.

KING: You have not seen her, or you would not talk in this fashion.

MÁTHAVYA: I can quite understand it must require something surpassingly attractive to excite the admiration of such a great man as you.

KING: I will describe her, my dear friend, in a few words—

Man's all-wise Maker, wishing to create
A faultless form, whose matchless symmetry
Should far transcend Creation's choicest works,
Did call together by his mighty will,
And garner up in his eternal mind,
A bright assemblage of all lovely things:—
And then, as in a picture, fashion them
Into one perfect and ideal form.
Such the divine, the wondrous prototype,
Whence her fair shape was moulded into being.

MÁTHAVYA: If that's the case, she must indeed throw all other beauties into the shade.

KING: To my mind she really does.

This peerless maid is like a fragrant flower,
Whose perfumed breath has never been diffused;
A tender bud, that no profaning hand
Has dared to sever from its parent stalk;
A gem of priceless water, just released
Pure and unblemished from its glittering bed.
Or may the maiden haply be compared
To sweetest honey, that no mortal lip
Has sipped; or, rather to the mellowed fruit
Of virtuous actions in some former birth,
Now brought to full perfection? Lives the man
Whom bounteous heaven has destined to espouse her?

MÁTHAVYA: Make haste, then, to her aid; you have no time to lose, if you don't wish this fruit of all the virtues to drop into the mouth of some greasy-headed rustic of devout habits.

KING: The lady is not her own mistress, and her foster-father is not at home.

MÁTHAVYA: Well, but tell me, did she look at all kindly upon you?

KING: Maidens brought up in a hermitage are naturally shy and reserved; but for all that,

She did look towards me, though she quick withdrew
Her stealthy glances when she met my gaze;
She smiled upon me sweetly, but disguised
With maiden grace the secret of her smiles.
Coy love was half unveiled; then, sudden checked
By modesty, left half to be divined.

MÁTHAVYA: Why, of course, my dear friend, you never could seriously expect that at the very first sight she would fall over head and ears in love with you, and without more ado come and sit in your lap.

KING: When we parted from each other, she betrayed her liking for me by clearer indications, but still with the utmost modesty.

Scarce had the fair one from my presence passed,
When, suddenly, without apparent cause,
She stopped, and counterfeiting pain, exclaimed,
"My foot is wounded by this prickly grass."
Then glancing at me tenderly, she feigned
Another charming pretext for delay,
Pretending that a bush had caught her robe,
And turned as if to disentangle it.

MÁTHAVYA: I trust you have laid in a good stock of provisions, for I see you intend making this consecrated grove your game-preserve, and will be roaming here in quest of sport for some time to come.

KING: You must know, my good fellow, that I have been recognized by some of the inmates of the hermitage. Now I want the assistance of your fertile invention, in devising some excuse for going there again.

MÁTHAVYA: There is but one expedient that I can suggest. You are the King, are you not?

KING: What then?

MÁTHAVYA: Say you have come for the sixth part of their grain, which they owe you for tribute.

KING: No, no, foolish man; these hermits pay me a very different kind of tribute, which I value more than heaps of gold or jewels; observe,

The tribute which my other subjects bring
Must moulder into dust, but holy men
Present me with a portion of the fruits
Of penitential services and prayers—
A precious and imperishable gift.

A VOICE [*behind the scenes*]: We are fortunate; here is the object of our search.

KING [*listening*]: Surely those must be the voices of hermits, to judge by their deep tones.

WARDER [*entering*]: Victory to the King! two young hermits are in waiting outside, and solicit an audience of your Majesty.

KING: Introduce them immediately.

WARDER: I will, my liege. [*Goes out, and reënters with two young Hermits.*] This way, Sirs, this way.

[*Both the Hermits look at the King.*

FIRST HERMIT: How majestic is his mien, and yet what confidence it inspires! But this might be expected in a king whose character and habits have earned for him a title only one degree removed from that of a Saint.

In this secluded grove, whose sacred joys
All may participate, he deigns to dwell
Like one of us; and daily treasures up
A store of purest merit for himself,
By the protection of our holy rites.
In his own person wondrously are joined
Both majesty and saintlike holiness:—
And often chanted by inspirèd bards,
His hallowed title of "Imperial Sage"
Ascends in joyous accents to the skies.

SECOND HERMIT: Bear in mind, Gautama, that this is the great Dushyanta, the friend of Indra.

FIRST HERMIT: What of that?

SECOND HERMIT: Where is the wonder if his nervous arm,
Puissant and massive as the iron bar
That binds a castle-gateway, singly sways
The sceptre of the universal earth,
E'en to its dark-green boundary of waters?
Or if the gods, beholden to his aid
In their fierce warfare with the powers of hell,
Should blend his name with Indra's in their songs
Of victory, and gratefully accord
No lower meed of praise to his braced bow,
Than to the thunders of the god of heaven?

BOTH THE HERMITS [*approaching*]: Victory to the King!

KING [*rising from his seat*]: Hail to you both!

BOTH THE HERMITS: Heaven bless your Majesty!

[*They offer fruits.*

KING [*respectfully receiving the offering*]: Tell me, I pray you, the object of your visit.

BOTH THE HERMITS: The inhabitants of the hermitage, having heard of your Majesty's sojourn in our neighborhood, make this humble petition.

KING: What are their commands?

BOTH THE HERMITS: In the absence of our Superior, the great Sage Kanwa, evil demons are disturbing our sacrificial rites.[8] Deign, therefore, accompanied by your charioteer, to take up your abode in our hermitage for a few days.

KING: I am honored by your invitation.

MÁTHAVYA [*aside*]: Most opportune and convenient, certainly!

KING [*smiling*]: Ho! there, Raivataka! Tell the charioteer from me to bring round the chariot with my bow.

WARDER: I will, Sire. [*Exit.*

BOTH THE HERMITS [*joyfully*]: Well it becomes the King by acts of grace
To emulate the virtues of his race.
Such acts thy lofty destiny attest;
Thy mission is to succor the distressed.

KING [*bowing to the Hermits*]: Go first, reverend Sirs, I will follow you immediately.

BOTH THE HERMITS: May victory attend you! [*Exeunt.*

KING: My dear Máthavya, are you not full of longing to see Śakoontalá?

MÁTHAVYA: To tell you the truth, though I was just now brimful of desire to see her, I have not a drop left since this piece of news about the demons.

KING: Never fear; you shall keep close to me for protection.

MÁTHAVYA: Well, you must be my guardian-angel, and act the part of a very Vishnu[9] to me.

WARDER [*entering*]: Sire, the chariot is ready, and only waits to conduct you to victory. But here is a messenger named Karabhaka, just arrived from your capital, with a message from the Queen, your mother.

KING [*respectfully*]: How say you? a messenger from the venerable Queen?

WARDER: Even so.

KING: Introduce him at once.

WARDER: I will, Sire. [*Goes out, and reënters with Karabhaka.*] Behold the King! Approach.

KARABHAKA: Victory to the King! The Queen-mother bids me say that in four days from the present time she intends celebrating a solemn ceremony for the advancement and preservation of her son. She expects that your Majesty will honor her with your presence on that occasion.

KING: This places me in a dilemma. Here, on the one hand,

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[8] The religious rites of holy men were often disturbed by certain evil spirits called Rákshasas, who were the determined enemies of piety and devotion.

[9] Vishnu, the Preserver, was one of the three principal gods.

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is the commission of these holy men to be executed; and, on the other, the command of my revered parent to be obeyed. Both duties are too sacred to be neglected. What is to be done?

MÁTHAVYA: You will have to take up an intermediate position between the two, like King Triśanku, who was suspended between heaven and earth, because the sage Viśwámitra commanded him to mount up to heaven, and the gods ordered him down again.

KING: I am certainly very much perplexed. For here,

Two different duties are required of me
In widely distant places; how can I
In my own person satisfy them both?
Thus is my mind distracted and impelled
In opposite directions, like a stream
That, driven back by rocks, still rushes on,
Forming two currents in its eddying course.

[*Reflecting.*] Friend Máthavya, as you were my playfellow in childhood, the Queen has always received you like a second son; go you, then, back to her and tell her of my solemn engagement to assist these holy men. You can supply my place in the ceremony, and act the part of a son to the Queen.

MÁTHAVYA: With the greatest pleasure in the world; but don't suppose that I am really coward enough to have the slightest fear of those trumpery demons.

KING [*smiling*]: Oh! of course not; a great Bráhman like you could not possibly give way to such weakness.

MÁTHAVYA: You must let me travel in a manner suitable to the King's younger brother.

KING: Yes, I shall send my retinue with you, that there may be no further disturbance in this sacred forest.

MÁTHAVYA [*with a strut*]: Already I feel quite like a young prince.

KING [*aside*]: This is a giddy fellow, and in all probability he will let out the truth about my present pursuit to the women of the palace. What is to be done? I must say something to deceive him. [*Aloud to Máthavya, taking him by the hand.*] Dear friend, I am going to the hermitage wholly and solely out of respect for its pious inhabitants, and not because I have really any liking for Śakoontalá, the hermit's daughter. Observe,

What suitable communion could there be
Between a monarch and a rustic girl?
I did but feign an idle passion, friend,
Take not in earnest what was said in jest.

MÁTHAVYA: Don't distress yourself; I quite understand.

[*Exeunt.*

Y AVAILABLE

PRELUDE TO ACT THIRD

Scene—The Hermitage

Enter a young Bráhman, carrying bundles of Kuśa-grass for the use of the sacrificing priests.

YOUNG BRÁHMAN: How wonderful is the power of King Dushyanta! No sooner did he enter our hermitage, than we were able to proceed with our sacrificial rites, unmolested by the evil demons.

No need to fix the arrow to the bow;
The mighty monarch sounds the quivering string,
And, by the thunder of his arms dismayed,
Our demon foes are scattered to the wind.

I must now, therefore, make haste and deliver to the sacrificing priests these bundles of Kuśa-grass, to be strewn round the altar. [*Walking and looking about; then addressing someone off the stage.*] Why, Priyamvadá, for whose use are you carrying that ointment of Usíra-root and those lotus leaves with fibres attached to them? [*Listening for her answer.*] What say you?—that Śakoontalá is suffering from fever produced by exposure to the sun, and that this ointment is to cool her burning frame? Nurse her with care, then, Priyamvadá, for she is cherished by our reverend Superior as the very breath of his nostrils. I, for my part, will contrive that soothing waters, hallowed in the sacrifice, be administered to her by the hands of Gautamí. [*Exit.*

ACT THIRD

Scene—The Sacred Grove

Enter King Dushyanta, with the air of one in love.

KING [*sighing thoughtfully*]: The holy sage possesses magic power
In virtue of his penance; she, his ward,
Under the shadow of his tutelage
Rests in security. I know it well;
Yet sooner shall the rushing cataract
In foaming eddies re-ascend the steep,
Than my fond heart turn back from its pursuit.

God of Love! God of the flowery shafts![7] we are all of us cruelly deceived by thee, and by the Moon, however deserving of confidence you may both appear.

For not to us do these thine arrows seem
Pointed with tender flowerets; not to us
Doth the pale moon irradiate the earth
With beams of silver fraught with cooling dews:—
But on our fevered frames the moon-beams fall
Like darts of fire, and every flower-tipped shaft
Of Káma, as it probes our throbbing hearts,
Seems to be barbed with hardest adamant.

Adorable god of love! hast thou no pity for me? [*In a tone of anguish.*] How can thy arrows be so sharp when they are pointed with flowers? Ah! I know the reason:

E'en now in thine unbodied essence lurks
The fire of Siva's anger, like the flame
That ever hidden in the secret depths
Of ocean, smoulders there unseen. How else
Couldst thou, all immaterial as thou art,
Inflame our hearts thus fiercely?—thou, whose form
Was scorched to ashes by a sudden flash
From the offended god's terrific eye.
Yet, methinks,
Welcome this anguish, welcome to my heart
These rankling wounds inflicted by the god,
Who on his scutcheon bears the monster-fish
Slain by his prowess: welcome death itself,
So that, commissioned by the lord of love,
This fair one be my executioner.

Adorable divinity! Can I by no reproaches excite your commiseration?

Have I not daily offered at thy shrine
Innumerable vows, the only food
Of thine ethereal essence? Are my prayers
Thus to be slighted? Is it meet that thou
Shouldst aim thy shafts at thy true votary's heart, 214
Drawing thy bow-string even to thy ear?

[*Pacing up and down in a melancholy manner.*] Now that the holy men have completed their rites, and have no more need of my services, how shall I dispel my melancholy? [*Sighing.*] I have but one resource. Oh for another sight of the idol of my soul! I will seek her. [*Glancing at the sun.*] In all probability, as the sun's heat is now at its height, Sakoontalá is passing her time under the shade of the bowers on the banks of the Málinî, attended by her maidens. I will go and look for her there. [*Walking and looking about.*] I suspect the fair one has but just passed by this avenue of young trees.

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[7] Káma, the Hindoo Cupid, or god of love. He has five arrows, each tipped with the blossom of a flower, which pierce the heart through the five senses.

Here, as she tripped along, her fingers plucked
The opening buds: these lacerated plants,
Shorn of their fairest blossoms by her hand,
Seem like dismembered trunks, whose recent wounds
Are still unclosed; while from the bleeding socket
Of many a severed stalk, the milky juice
Still slowly trickles, and betrays her path.

[*Feeling a breeze.*] What a delicious breeze meets me in this spot!

Here may the zephyr, fragrant with the scent
Of lotuses, and laden with the spray
Caught from the waters of the rippling stream,
Fold in its close embrace my fevered limbs.

[*Walking and looking about.*] She must be somewhere in the neighborhood of this arbor of overhanging creepers, enclosed by plantations of cane. [*Looking down.*

For at the entrance here I plainly see
A line of footsteps printed in the sand.
Here are the fresh impressions of her feet;
Their well-known outline faintly marked in front,
More deeply towards the heel; betokening
The graceful undulation of her gait.

I will peep through those branches. [*Walking and looking. With transport.*] Ah! now my eyes are gratified by an entrancing sight. Yonder is the beloved of my heart reclining on a rock strewn with flowers, and attended by her two friends. How fortunate! Concealed behind the leaves, I will listen to their conversation, without raising their suspicions.

[*Stands concealed, and gazes at them.*

Sakoontalá and her two attendants, holding fans in their hands, are discovered as described.

PRIYAMVADA *and* ANASÚYÁ [*fanning her. In a tone of affection*]: Dearest Sakoontalá, is the breeze raised by these broad lotus leaves refreshing to you?

SAKOONTALÁ: Dear friends, why should you trouble yourselves to fan me?

[*Priyamvadá and Anasúyá look sorrowfully at one another.*

KING: Sakoontalá seems indeed to be seriously ill. [*Thoughtfully.*] Can it be the intensity of the heat that has affected her? or does my heart suggest the true cause of her malady? [*Gazing at her passionately.*] Why should I doubt it?

The maiden's spotless bosom is o'erspread
With cooling balsam; on her slender arm
Her only bracelet, twined with lotus stalks,
Hangs loose and withered; her recumbent form
Expresses languor. Ne'er could noon-day sun
Inflict such fair disorder on a maid—
No, love, and love alone, is here to blame.

PRIYAMVADÁ [*aside to Anasúyá*]: I have observed, Anasúyá, that Śakoontalá has been indisposed ever since her first interview with King Dushyanta. Depend upon it, her ailment is to be traced to this source.

ANASÚYÁ: The same suspicion, dear Priyamvadá, has crossed my mind. But I will at once ask her and ascertain the truth. [*Aloud.*] Dear Śakoontalá, I am about to put a question to you. Your indisposition is really very serious.

ŚAKOONTALÁ [*half-rising from her couch*]: What were you going to ask?

ANASÚYÁ: We know very little about love-matters, dear Śakoontalá; but for all that, I cannot help suspecting your present state to be something similar to that of the lovers we have read about in romances. Tell us frankly what is the cause of your disorder. It is useless to apply a remedy, until the disease be understood.

KING: Anasúyá bears me out in my suspicion.

ŚAKOONTALÁ [*aside*]: I am, indeed, deeply in love; but cannot rashly disclose my passion to these young girls.

PRIYAMVADÁ: What Anasúyá says, dear Śakoontalá, is very just. Why give so little heed to your ailment? Every day you are becoming thinner; though I must confess your complexion is still as beautiful as ever.

KING: Priyamvadá speaks most truly.

Sunk is her velvet cheek; her wasted bosom
Loses its fulness; e'en her slender waist
Grows more attenuate; her face is wan,
Her shoulders droop;—as when the vernal blasts
Sear the young blossoms of the Mádhaví,
Blighting their bloom; so mournful is the change,
Yet in its sadness, fascinating still,
Inflicted by the mighty lord of love
On the fair figure of the hermit's daughter.

ŚAKOONTALÁ: Dear friends, to no one would I rather reveal the nature of my malady than to you; but I should only be troubling you.

PRIYAMVADÁ *and* ANASÚYÁ: Nay, this is the very point about which we are so solicitous. Sorrow shared with affectionate friends is relieved of half its poignancy.

KING: Pressed by the partners of her joys and griefs,
Her much beloved companions, to reveal
The cherished secret locked within her breast,
She needs must utter it; although her looks
Encourage me to hope, my bosom throbs
As anxiously I listen for her answer.

ŚAKOONTALÁ: Know then, dear friends, that from the first moment the illustrious Prince, who is the guardian of our grove, presented himself to my sight—

[*Stops short, and appears confused.*

PRIYAMVADÁ *and* ANASÚYÁ: Say on, dear Śakoontalá, say on.

ŚAKOONTALÁ: Ever since that happy moment, my heart's affections have been fixed upon him, and my energies of mind and body have all deserted me, as you see.

KING [*with rapture*]: Her own lips have uttered the words I most longed to hear.

Love lit the flame, and Love himself allays
My burning fever, as when gathering clouds
Rise o'er the earth in summer's dazzling noon,
And grateful showers dispel the morning heat.

ŚAKOONTALÁ: You must consent, then, dear friends, to contrive some means by which I may find favor with the King, or you will have ere long to assist at my funeral.

KING [*with rapture*]: Enough! These words remove all my doubts.

PRIYAMVADÁ [*aside to Anasúyá*]: She is far gone in love, dear Anasúyá, and no time ought to be lost. Since she has fixed her affections on a monarch who is the ornament of Puru's line, we need not hesitate for a moment to express our approval.

ANASÚYÁ: I quite agree with you.

PRIYAMVADÁ [*aloud*]: We wish you joy, dear Sakoontalá. Your affections are fixed on an object in every respect worthy of you. The noblest river will unite itself to the ocean, and the lovely Mádhaví-creeper clings naturally to the Mango, the only tree capable of supporting it.

KING: Why need we wonder if the beautiful constellation Viśákhá pines to be united with the Moon.

ANASÚYÁ: By what stratagem can we best secure to our friend the accomplishment of her heart's desire, both speedily and secretly?

PRIYAMVADÁ: The latter point is all we have to think about. As to "speedily," I look upon the whole affair as already settled.

ANASÚYÁ: How so?

PRIYAMVADÁ: Did you not observe how the King betrayed his liking by the tender manner in which he gazed upon her, and how thin he has become the last few days, as if he had been lying awake thinking of her?

KING [*looking at himself*]: Quite true! I certainly am becoming thin from want of sleep:—

As night by night in anxious thought I raise
This wasted arm to rest my sleepless head,
My jewelled bracelet, sullied by the tears
That trickle from my eyes in scalding streams,
Slips towards my elbow from my shrivelled wrist.
Oft I replace the bauble, but in vain;
So easily it spans the fleshless limb
That e'en the rough and corrugated skin,
Scarred by the bow-string, will not check its fall.

PRIYAMVADÁ [*thoughtfully*]: An idea strikes me, Anasúyá. Let Śakoontalá write a love-letter; I will conceal it in a flower, and contrive to drop it in the King's path. He will surely mistake it for the remains of some sacred offering, and will, in all probability, pick it up.

ANASÚYÁ: A very ingenious device! It has my entire approval; but what says Śakoontalá?

ŚAKOONTALÁ: I must consider before I can consent to it.

PRIYAMVADÁ: Could you not, dear Śakoontalá, think of some pretty composition in verse, containing a delicate declaration of your love?

ŚAKOONTALÁ: Well, I will do my best; but my heart trembles when I think of the chances of a refusal.

KING [*with rapture*]: Too timid maid, here stands the man from whom

Thou fearest a repulse; supremely blessed
To call thee all his own. Well might he doubt
His title to thy love; but how couldst thou
Believe thy beauty powerless to subdue him?

PRIYAMVADÁ *and* ANASÚYÁ: You undervalue your own merits, dear Śakoontalá. What man in his senses would intercept with the skirt of his robe the bright rays of the autumnal moon, which alone can allay the fever of his body?

ŚAKOONTALÁ [*smiling*]: Then it seems I must do as I am bid. [*Sits down and appears to be thinking.*

KING: How charming she looks! My very eyes forget to wink, jealous of losing even for an instant a sight so enchanting.

How beautiful the movement of her brow,
As through her mind love's tender fancies flow!
And, as she weighs her thoughts, how sweet to trace
The ardent passion mantling in her face!

ŚAKOONTALÁ: Dear girls, I have thought of a verse, but I have no writing-materials at hand.

PRIYAMVADÁ: Write the letters with your nail on this lotus leaf, which is smooth as a parrot's breast.

ŚAKOONTALÁ [*after writing the verse*]: Listen, dear friends, and tell me whether the ideas are appropriately expressed.

PRIYAMVADÁ *and* ANASÚYÁ: We are all attention.

ŚAKOONTALÁ [*reads*]:

I know not the secret thy bosom conceals,
Thy form is not near me to gladden my sight;
But sad is the tale that my fever reveals,
Of the love that consumes me by day and by night.

KING [*advancing hastily towards her*]:

Nay, Love does but warm thee, fair maiden—thy frame
Only droops like the bud in the glare of the noon;
But me he consumes with a pitiless flame,
As the beams of the day-star destroy the pale moon.

PRIYAMVADÁ *and* ANASÚYÁ [*looking at him joyfully, and rising to salute him*]: Welcome, the desire of our hearts, that so speedily presents itself! [*Śakoontalá makes an effort to rise.*

KING: Nay, trouble not thyself, dear maiden,
Move not to do me homage; let thy limbs
Still softly rest upon their flowery couch,
And gather fragrance from the lotus stalks
Bruised by the fevered contact of thy frame.

ANASÚYÁ: Deign, gentle Sir, to seat yourself on the rock on which our friend is reposing.

[*The King sits down. Śakoontalá is confused.*

PRIYAMVADÁ: Anyone may see at a glance that you are deeply attached to each other. But the affection I have for my friend prompts me to say something of which you hardly require to be informed.

KING: Do not hesitate to speak out, my good girl. If you omit to say what is in your mind, you may be sorry for it afterwards.

PRIYAMVADÁ: Is it not your special office as a King to remove the suffering of your subjects who are in trouble?

KING: Such is my duty, most assuredly.

PRIYAMVADÁ: Know, then, that our dear friend has been brought to her present state of suffering entirely through love for you. Her life is in your hands; take pity on her and restore her to health.

KING: Excellent maiden, our attachment is mutual. It is I who am the most honored by it.

ŚAKOONTALÁ [*looking at Priyamvadá*]: What do you mean by detaining the King, who must be anxious to return to his royal consorts after so long a separation?

KING: Sweet maiden, banish from thy mind the thought
That I could love another. Thou dost reign

Supreme, without a rival, in my heart,
And I am thine alone: disown me not,
Else must I die a second deadlier death—
Killed by thy words, as erst by Káma's shafts.

ANASÚYÁ: Kind Sir, we have heard it said that kings have many favorite consorts. You must not, then, by your behavior towards our dear friend, give her relations cause to sorrow for her.

KING: Listen, gentle maiden, while in a few words I quiet your anxiety.

Though many beauteous forms my palace grace,
Henceforth two things alone will I esteem
The glory of my royal dynasty;—
My sea-girt realm, and this most lovely maid.

PRIYAMVADÁ *and* ANASÚYÁ: We are satisfied by your assurances.

PRIYAMVADÁ [*glancing on one side*]: See, Anasúyá, there is our favorite little fawn running about in great distress, and turning its eyes in every direction as if looking for its mother; come, let us help the little thing to find her. [*Both move away.*

ŚAKOONTALÁ: Dear friends, dear friends, leave me not alone and unprotected. Why need you both go?

PRIYAMVADÁ *and* ANASÚYÁ: Unprotected! when the Protector of the world is at your side. [*Exeunt.*

ŚAKOONTALÁ: What! have they both really left me?

KING: Distress not thyself, sweet maiden. Thy adorer is at hand to wait upon thee.

Oh, let me tend thee, fair one, in the place
Of thy dear friends; and, with broad lotus fans,
Raise cooling breezes to refresh thy frame;
Or shall I rather, with caressing touch,
Allay the fever of thy limbs, and soothe
Thy aching feet, beauteous as blushing lilies?

ŚAKOONTALÁ: Nay, touch me not. I will not incur the censure of those whom I am bound to respect. [*Rises and attempts to go.*

KING: Fair one, the heat of noon has not yet subsided, and thy body is still feeble.

How canst thou quit thy fragrant couch of flowers,
And from thy throbbing bosom cast aside
Its covering of lotus leaves, to brave
With weak and fainting limbs the noon-day heat?
[*Forces her to turn back.*

ŚAKOONTALÁ: Infringe not the rules of decorum, mighty descendant of Puru. Remember, though I love you, I have no power to dispose of myself.

KING: Why this fear of offending your relations, timid maid?

When your venerable foster-father hears of it, he will not find fault with you. He knows that the law permits us to be united without consulting him.

In Indra's heaven, so at least 'tis said,
No nuptial rites prevail,[8] nor is the bride
Led to the altar by her future spouse;
But all in secret does the bridegroom plight
His troth, and each unto the other vow
Mutual allegiance. Such espousals, too,
Are authorized on earth, and many daughters
Of royal saints thus wedded to their lords,
Have still received their father's benison.

ŚAKOONTALÁ: Leave me, leave me; I must take counsel with my female friends.

KING: I will leave thee when—

ŚAKOONTALÁ: When?

KING: When I have gently stolen from thy lips
Their yet untasted nectar, to allay
The raging of my thirst, e'en as the bee
Sips the fresh honey from the opening bud.

[*Attempts to raise her face. Śakoontalá tries to prevent him.*

A VOICE [*behind the scenes*]: The loving birds, doomed by fate to nightly separation, must bid farewell to each other, for evening is at hand.

ŚAKOONTALÁ [*in confusion*]: Great Prince, I hear the voice of the matron Gautamí. She is coming this way, to inquire after my health. Hasten and conceal yourself behind the branches.

KING: I will. [*Conceals himself.*

Enter Gautamí with a vase in her hand, preceded by two attendants.

ATTENDANTS: This way, most venerable Gautamí.

GAUTAMÍ [*approaching Śakoontalá*]: My child, is the fever of thy limbs allayed?

ŚAKOONTALÁ: Venerable mother, there is certainly a change for the better.

GAUTAMÍ: Let me sprinkle you with this holy water, and all your ailments will depart. [*Sprinkling Śakoontalá on the head.*] The day is closing, my child; come, let us go to the cottage. [*They all move away.*

ŚAKOONTALÁ [*aside*]: Oh my heart! thou didst fear to taste of happiness when it was within thy reach. Now that the object of thy desires is torn from thee, how bitter will be thy remorse, how distracting thine anguish! [*Moving*

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[8] A marriage without the usual ceremonies is called Gándharva. It was supposed to be the form of marriage prevalent among the nymphs of Indra's heaven.

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on a few steps and stopping. Aloud.] Farewell! bower of creepers, sweet soother of my sufferings, farewell! may I soon again be happy under thy shade.

[*Exit reluctantly with the others.*

KING [*returning to his former seat in the arbor. Sighing*]: Alas! how many are the obstacles to the accomplishment of our wishes!

Albeit she did coyly turn away
Her glowing cheek, and with her fingers guard
Her pouting lips, that murmured a denial
In faltering accents, she did yield herself
A sweet reluctant captive to my will,
As eagerly I raised her lovely face:
But ere with gentle force I stole the kiss,
Too envious Fate did mar my daring purpose.

Whither now shall I betake myself? I will tarry for a brief space in this bower of creepers, so endeared to me by the presence of my beloved Śakoontalá.

[*Looking round.*

Here printed on the flowery couch I see
The fair impression of her slender limbs;
Here is the sweet confession of her love,
Traced with her nail upon the lotus leaf—
And yonder are the withered lily stalks
That graced her wrist. While all around I view
Things that recall her image, can I quit
This bower, e'en though its living charm be fled?

A VOICE [*in the air*]: Great King,
Scarce is our evening sacrifice begun,
When evil demons, lurid as the clouds
That gather round the dying orb of day,
Cluster in hideous troops, obscene and dread,
About our altars, casting far and near
Terrific shadows, while the sacred fire
Sheds a pale lustre o'er their ghostly shapes.

KING: I come to the rescue, I come. [*Exit.*

PRELUDE TO ACT FOURTH

Scene—The Garden of the Hermitage

Enter Priyamvadá and Anasúyá in the act of gathering flowers.

ANASÚYÁ: Although, dear Priyamvadá, it rejoices my heart to think that Śakoontalá has been happily united to a husband in every respect worthy of her, by the form of marriage prevalent among Indra's celestial musicians, nevertheless, I cannot help feeling somewhat uneasy in my mind.

PRIYAMVADÁ: How so?

ANASÚYÁ: You know that the pious King was gratefully dismissed by the hermits on the successful termination of their sacrificial rites. He has now returned to his capital, leaving Śakoontalá under our care; and it may be doubted whether, in the society of his royal consorts, he will not forget all that has taken place in this hermitage of ours.

PRIYAMVADÁ: On that score be at ease. Persons of his noble nature are not so destitute of all honorable feeling. I confess, however, that there is one point about which I am rather anxious. What, think you, will father Kanwa say when he hears what has occurred?

ANASÚYÁ: In my opinion, he will approve the marriage.

PRIYAMVADÁ: What makes you think so?

ANASÚYÁ: From the first, it was always his fixed purpose to bestow the maiden on a husband worthy of her; and since heaven has given her such a husband, his wishes have been realized without any trouble to himself.

PRIYAMVADÁ [*looking at the flower-basket*]: We have gathered flowers enough for the sacred offering, dear Anasúyá.

ANASÚYÁ: Well, then, let us now gather more, that we may have wherewith to propitiate the guardian-deity of our dear Śakoontalá.

PRIYAMVADÁ: By all means. [*They continue gathering.*

A VOICE [*behind the scenes*]: Ho there! See you not that I am here?

ANASÚYÁ [*listening*]: That must be the voice of a guest announcing his arrival.

PRIYAMVADÁ: Surely, Śakoontalá is not absent from the cottage. [*Aside.*] Her heart at least is absent, I fear.

ANASÚYÁ: Come along, come along; we have gathered flowers enough. [*They move away.*

THE SAME VOICE [*behind the scenes*]: Woe to thee, maiden, for daring to slight a guest like me!

Shall I stand here unwelcomed; even I,
A very mine of penitential merit,
Worthy of all respect? Shalt thou, rash maid,
Thus set at nought the ever sacred ties
Of hospitality? and fix thy thoughts
Upon the cherished object of thy love,
While I am present? Thus I curse thee, then—
He, even he of whom thou thinkest, he
Shall think no more of thee; nor in his heart
Retain thy image. Vainly shalt thou strive
To waken his remembrance of the past;

He shall disown thee, even as the sot,
Roused from his midnight drunkenness, denies
The words he uttered in his revellings.

PRIYAMVADÁ: Alas! alas! I fear a terrible misfortune has occurred. Sakoontalá, from absence of mind, must have offended some guest whom she was bound to treat with respect. [*Looking behind the scenes.*] Ah! yes; I see, and no less a person than the great sage Durvasas, who is known to be most irascible. He it is that has just cursed her, and is now retiring with hasty strides, trembling with passion, and looking as if nothing could turn him. His wrath is like a consuming fire.

ANASÚYÁ: Go quickly, dear Priyamvadá, throw yourself at his feet, and persuade him to come back, while I prepare a propitiatory offering for him, with water and refreshments.

PRIYAMVADÁ: I will. [*Exit.*

ANASÚYÁ [*advancing hastily a few steps and stumbling*]: Alas! alas! this comes of being in a hurry. My foot has slipped and my basket of flowers has fallen from my hand. [*Stays to gather them up.*

PRIYAMVADÁ [*reëntering*]: Well, dear Anasúyá, I have done my best; but what living being could succeed in pacifying such a cross-grained, ill-tempered old fellow? However, I managed to mollify him a little.

ANASÚYÁ [*smiling*]: Even a little was much for him. Say on.

PRIYAMVADÁ: When he refused to turn back, I implored his forgiveness in these words: "Most venerable sage, pardon, I beseech you, this first offense of a young and inexperienced girl, who was ignorant of the respect due to your saintly character and exalted rank."

ANASÚYÁ: And what did he reply?

PRIYAMVADÁ: "My word must not be falsified; but at the sight of the ring of recognition the spell shall cease." So saying, he disappeared.

ANASÚYÁ: Oh! then we may breathe again; for now I think of it, the King himself, at his departure, fastened on Sakoontalá's finger, as a token of remembrance, a ring on which his own name was engraved. She has, therefore, a remedy for her misfortune at her own command.

PRIYAMVADÁ: Come, dear Anasúyá, let us proceed with our religious duties. [*They walk away.*

PRIYAMVADÁ [*looking off the stage*]: See, Anasúyá, there sits our dear friend, motionless as a statue, resting her face on her left hand, her whole mind absorbed in thinking of her absent husband. She can pay no attention to herself, much less to a stranger.

ANASÚYÁ: Priyamvadá, let this affair never pass our lips. We must spare our dear friend's feelings. Her constitution is too delicate to bear much emotion.

PRIYAMVADÁ: I agree with you. Who would think of watering a tender jasmine with hot water?

ACT FOURTH

Scene—The Neighborhood of the Hermitage

Enter one of Kanwa's pupils, just arisen from his couch at the dawn of day.

PUPIL: My master, the venerable Kanwa, who is but lately returned from his pilgrimage, has ordered me to ascertain how the time goes. I have therefore come into the open air to see if it be still dark. [*Walking and looking about.*] Oh! the dawn has already broken.

Lo! in one quarter of the sky, the Moon,
Lord of the herbs and night-expanding flowers,
Sinks towards his bed behind the western hills;
While in the east, preceded by the Dawn,
His blushing charioteer, the glorious Sun
Begins his course, and far into the gloom
Casts the first radiance of his orient beams.
Hail! co-eternal orbs, that rise to set,
And set to rise again; symbols divine
Of man's reverses, life's vicissitudes.
And now,
While the round Moon withdraws his looming disc
Beneath the western sky, the full-blown flower
Of the night-loving lotus sheds her leaves
In sorrow for his loss, bequeathing nought
But the sweet memory of her loveliness
To my bereavèd sight: e'en as the bride
Disconsolately mourns her absent lord,
And yields her heart a prey to anxious grief.

ANASÚYÁ [*entering abruptly*]: Little as I know of the ways of the world, I cannot help thinking that King Dushyanta is treating Sakoontalá very improperly.

PUPIL: Well, I must let my revered preceptor know that it is time to offer the burnt oblation. [*Exit.*

ANASÚYÁ: I am broad awake, but what shall I do? I have no energy to go about my usual occupations. My hands and feet seem to have lost their power. Well, Love has gained his object; and Love only is to blame for having induced our dear friend, in the innocence of her heart, to confide in such a perfidious man. Possibly, however, the imprecation of Durvasas may be already taking effect. Indeed, I cannot otherwise account for the King's strange conduct, in allowing so long a time to elapse without even a letter; and that, too, after so many promises and protestations. I cannot think what to do, unless we send him the ring which was to be the token of recognition. But which of these austere hermits could we ask to be the bearer of it? Then, again, Father Kanwa has just returned from his pilgrimage: and how am I to inform him of Sakoontalá's marriage to King Dushyanta, and her expectation of being soon a mother? I never could bring myself to tell him, even if I felt that Sakoontalá had been in fault, which she certainly has not. What is to be done?

PRIYAMVADÁ [*entering; joyfully*]: Quick! quick! Anasúyá! come and assist in the joyful preparations for Sakoontalá's departure to her husband's palace.

ANASÚYÁ: My dear girl, what can you mean?

PRIYAMVADÁ: Listen, now, and I will tell you all about it. I went just now to Sakoontalá, to inquire whether she had slept comfortably—

ANASÚYÁ: Well, well; go on.

PRIYAMVADÁ: She was sitting with her face bowed down to the very ground with shame, when Father Kanwa entered and, embracing her, of his own accord offered her his congratulations. "I give thee joy, my child," he said, "we have had an auspicious omen. The priest who offered the oblation dropped it into the very center of the sacred fire, though thick smoke obstructed his vision. Henceforth thou wilt cease to be an object of compassion. This very day I purpose sending thee, under the charge of certain trusty hermits, to the King's palace; and shall deliver thee into the hands of thy husband, as I would commit knowledge to the keeping of a wise and faithful student."

ANASÚYÁ: Who, then, informed the holy Father of what passed in his absence?

PRIYAMVADÁ: As he was entering the sanctuary of the consecrated fire, an invisible being chanted a verse in celestial strains.

ANASÚYÁ [*with astonishment*]: Indeed! pray repeat it.

PRIYAMVADÁ [*repeats the verse*]:

Glows in thy daughter King Dushyanta's glory,
  As in the sacred tree the mystic fire.
Let worlds rejoice to hear the welcome story;
  And may the son immortalize the sire.

ANASÚYÁ [*embracing Priyamvadá*]: Oh, my dear Priyamvadá,

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what delightful news! I am pleased beyond measure; yet when I think that we are to lose our dear Sakoontalá this very day, a feeling of melancholy mingles with my joy.

PRIYAMVADÁ: We shall find means of consoling ourselves after her departure. Let the dear creature only be made happy, at any cost.

ANASÚYÁ: Yes, yes, Priyamvadá, it shall be so; and now to prepare our bridal array. I have always looked forward to this occasion, and some time since, I deposited a beautiful garland of Keśara flowers in a cocoa-nut box, and suspended it on a bough of yonder mango-tree. Be good enough to stretch out your hand and take it down, while I compound unguents and perfumes with this consecrated paste and these blades of sacred grass.

PRIYAMVADÁ: Very well.

[*Exit Anasúyá. Priyamvadá takes down the flowers.*

A VOICE [*behind the scenes*]: Gautamí, bid Sárngarava and the others hold themselves in readiness to escort Sakoontalá.

PRIYAMVADÁ [*listening*]: Quick, quick, Anasúyá! They are calling the hermits who are to go with Śakoontalá to Hastinápur.

ANASÚYÁ [*reëntering, with the perfumed unguents in her hand*]: Come along then, Priyamvadá; I am ready to go with you. [*They walk away.*

PRIYAMVADÁ [*looking*]: See! there sits Śakoontalá, her locks arranged even at this early hour of the morning. The holy women of the hermitage are congratulating her, and invoking blessings on her head, while they present her with wedding-gifts and offerings of consecrated wild-rice. Let us join them. [*They approach.*

Śakoontalá is seen seated, with women surrounding her, occupied in the manner described.

FIRST WOMAN [*to Śakoontalá*]: My child, may'st thou receive the title of "Chief-queen," and may thy husband delight to honor thee above all others!

SECOND WOMAN: My child, may'st thou be the mother of a hero!

THIRD WOMAN: My child, may'st thou be highly honored by thy lord!

[*Exeunt all the women, excepting Gautamí, after blessing Śakoontalá.*

PRIYAMVADÁ *and* ANASÚYÁ [*approaching*]: Dear Sakoontalá we are come to assist you at your toilet, and may a blessing attend it!

BEST COPY AVAIL

ŚAKOONTALÁ: Welcome, dear friends, welcome. Sit down here.

PRIYAMVADÁ *and* **ANASÚYÁ** [*taking the baskets containing the bridal decorations, and sitting down*]: Now, then, dearest, prepare to let us dress you. We must first rub your limbs with these perfumed unguents.

ŚAKOONTALÁ: I ought indeed to be grateful for your kind offices, now that I am so soon to be deprived of them. Dear, dear friends, perhaps I shall never be dressed by you again. [*Bursts into tears.*

PRIYAMVADÁ *and* **ANASÚYÁ**: Weep not, dearest, tears are out of season on such a happy occasion.

[*They wipe away her tears and begin to dress her.*

PRIYAMVADÁ: Alas! these simple flowers and rude ornaments which our hermitage offers in abundance, do not set off your beauty as it deserves.

Enter two young Hermits, bearing costly presents.

BOTH HERMITS: Here are ornaments suitable for a queen.

[*The women look at them in astonishment.*

GAUTAMÍ: Why, Nárada, my son, whence came these?

FIRST HERMIT: You owe them to the devotion of Father Kanwa.

GAUTAMÍ: Did he create them by the power of his own mind?

SECOND HERMIT: Certainly not; but you shall hear. The venerable sage ordered us to collect flowers for Śakoontalá from the forest-trees; and we went to the wood for that purpose, when

Straightway depending from a neighboring tree
Appeared a robe of linen tissue, pure
And spotless as a moon-beam—mystic pledge
Of bridal happiness; another tree
Distilled a roseate dye wherewith to stain
The lady's feet; and other branches near
Glistened with rare and costly ornaments.
While, 'midst the leaves, the hands of forest-nymphs,
Vying in beauty with the opening buds,
Presented us with sylvan offerings.

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PRIYAMVADÁ [*looking at Śakoontalá*]: The wood-nymphs have done you honor, indeed. This favor doubtless signifies that you are soon to be received as a happy wife into your husband's house, and are from this forward to become the partner of his royal fortunes.

[*Śakoontalá appears confused.*

FIRST HERMIT: Come, Gautamí; Father Kanwa has finished his ablutions. Let us go and inform him of the favor

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we have received from the deities who preside over our trees. *[Exeunt.*

SECOND HERMIT: By all means.

PRIYAMVADÁ *and* ANASÚYÁ: Alas! what are we to do? We are unused to such splendid decorations, and are at a loss how to arrange them. Our knowledge of painting must be our guide. We will dispose the ornaments as we have seen them in pictures.

ŚAKOONTALÁ: Whatever pleases you, dear girls, will please me. I have perfect confidence in your taste.

[They commence dressing her.

Enter Kanwa, having just finished his ablutions.

KANWA: This day my loved one leaves me, and my heart
Is heavy with its grief: the streams of sorrow
Choked at the source, repress my faltering voice.
I have no words to speak; mine eyes are dimmed
By the dark shadows of the thoughts that rise
Within my soul. If such the force of grief
In an old hermit parted from his nursling,
What anguish must the stricken parent feel—
Bereft forever of an only daughter?

[Advances towards Śakoontalá.

PRIYAMVADÁ *and* ANASÚYÁ: Now, dearest Śakoontalá, we have finished decorating you. You have only to put on the two linen mantles. *[Śakoontalá rises and puts them on.*

GAUTAMÍ: Daughter, see, here comes thy foster-father; he is eager to fold thee in his arms; his eyes swim with tears of joy. Hasten to do him reverence.

ŚAKOONTALÁ [*reverently*]: My father, I salute you.

KANWA: My daughter,
May'st thou be highly honored by thy lord,
E'en as Yayáti Śarmishthá adored!
And, as she bore him Puru, so may'st thou
Bring forth a son to whom the world shall bow!

GAUTAMÍ: Most venerable father, she accepts your benediction as if she already possessed the boon it confers.

KANWA: Now come this way, my child, and walk reverently round these sacrificial fires. *[They all walk round.*

KANWA [*repeats a prayer in the metre of the Rig-veda*]:
Holy flames, that gleam around
Every altar's hallowed ground;
Holy flames, whose frequent food
Is the consecrated wood,
And for whose encircling bed,
Sacred Kuśa-grass is spread;
Holy flames, that waft to heaven
Sweet oblations daily given,

Mortal guilt to purge away;—
Hear, oh hear me, when I pray—
Purify my child this day!

Now then, my daughter, set out on thy journey. [*Looking on one side.*] Where are thy attendants, Sárngarava and the others?

YOUNG HERMIT [*entering*]: Here we are, most venerable father.

KANWA: Lead the way for thy sister.

ŚÁRNGARAVA: Come, Śakoontalá, let us proceed.

[*All move away.*

KANWA: Hear me, ye trees that surround our hermitage!
Śakoontalá ne'er moistened in the stream
Her own parched lips, till she had fondly poured
Its purest water on your thirsty roots;
And oft, when she would fain have decked her hair
With your thick-clustering blossoms, in her love
She robbed you not e'en of a single flower.
Her highest joy was ever to behold
The early glory of your opening buds:
Oh, then, dismiss her with a kind farewell!
This very day she quits her father's home,
To seek the palace of her wedded lord.

[*The note of a Köil is heard.*

Hark! heard'st thou not the answer of the trees,
Our sylvan sisters, warbled in the note
Of the melodious Köil? they dismiss
Their dear Śakoontalá with loving wishes.

VOICES [*in the air*]:
Fare thee well, journey pleasantly on amid streams
Where the lotuses bloom, and the sun's glowing beams
Never pierce the deep shade of the wide-spreading trees,
While gently around thee shall sport the cool breeze;
Then light be thy footsteps and easy thy tread,
Beneath thee shall carpets of lilies be spread.
Journey on to thy lord, let thy spirit be gay,
For the smiles of all Nature shall gladden thy way.

[*All listen with astonishment.*

GAUTAMÍ: Daughter! the nymphs of the wood, who love thee with the affection of a sister, dismiss thee with kind wishes for thy happiness. Take thou leave of them reverentially.

ŚAKOONTALÁ [*bowing respectfully and walking on. Aside to her friend*]: Eager as I am, dear Priyamvadá, to see my husband once more, yet my feet refuse to move, now that I am quitting forever the home of my girlhood.

PRIYAMVADÁ: You are not the only one, dearest, to feel the bitterness of parting. As the time of separation approaches, the whole grove seems to share your anguish.

In sorrow for thy loss, the herd of deer
Forget to browse; the peacock on the lawn
Ceases its dance; the very trees around us
Shed their pale leaves, like tears, upon the ground.

ŚAKOONTALÁ [*recollecting herself*]: My father, let me, before I go, bid adieu to my pet jasmine, the Moonlight of the Grove. I love the plant almost as a sister.

KANWA: Yes, yes, my child, I remember thy sisterly affection for the creeper. Here it is on the right.

ŚAKOONTALÁ [*approaching the jasmine*]: My beloved jasmine, most brilliant of climbing plants, how sweet it is to see thee cling thus fondly to thy husband, the mango-tree; yet, prithee, turn thy twining arms for a moment in this direction to embrace thy sister; she is going far away, and may never see thee again.

KANWA: Daughter, the cherished purpose of my heart
Has ever been to wed thee to a spouse
That should be worthy of thee; such a spouse
Hast thou thyself, by thine own merits, won.
To him thou goest, and about his neck
Soon shalt thou cling confidingly, as now
Thy favorite jasmine twines its loving arms
Around the sturdy mango. Leave thou it
To its protector—e'en as I consign
Thee to thy lord, and henceforth from my mind
Banish all anxious thought on thy behalf.

Proceed on thy journey, my child.

ŚAKOONTALÁ [*to Priyamvadá and Anasúyá*]: To you, my sweet companions, I leave it as a keepsake. Take charge of it when I am gone.

PRIYAMVADÁ *and* **ANASÚYÁ** [*bursting into tears*]: And to whose charge do you leave us, dearest? Who will care for us when you are gone?

KANWA: For shame, Anasúyá! dry your tears. Is this the way to cheer your friend at a time when she needs your support and consolation? [*All move on.*

ŚAKOONTALÁ: My father, see you there my pet deer, grazing close to the hermitage? She expects soon to fawn, and even now the weight of the little one she carries hinders her movements. Do not forget to send me word when she becomes a mother.

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KANWA: I will not forget it.

ŚAKOONTALÁ [*feeling herself drawn back*]: What can this be, fastened to my dress? [*Turns round.*

KANWA: My daughter,
It is the little fawn, thy foster-child.
Poor helpless orphan! it remembers well

How with a mother's tenderness and love
Thou didst protect it, and with grains of rice
From thine own hand didst daily nourish it;
And, ever and anon, when some sharp thorn
Had pierced its mouth, how gently thou didst tend
The bleeding wound, and pour in healing balm.
The grateful nursling clings to its protectress,
Mutely imploring leave to follow her.

ŚAKOONTALÁ: My poor little fawn, dost thou ask to follow an unhappy woman who hesitates not to desert her companions? When thy mother died, soon after thy birth, I supplied her place, and reared thee with my own hand; and now that thy second mother is about to leave thee, who will care for thee? My father, be thou a mother to her. My child, go back, and be a daughter to my father. [*Moves on, weeping.*

KANWA: Weep not, my daughter, check the gathering tear
That lurks beneath thine eyelid, ere it flow
And weaken thy resolve; be firm and true—
True to thyself and me; the path of life
Will lead o'er hill and plain, o'er rough and smooth,
And all must feel the steepness of the way;
Though rugged be thy course, press boldly on.

ŚÁRNGARAVA: Venerable sire! the sacred precept is—"Accompany thy friend as far as the margin of the first stream." Here then, we are arrived at the border of a lake. It is time for you to give us your final instructions and return.

KANWA: Be it so; let us tarry for a moment under the shade of this fig-tree. [*They do so.*

KANWA [*aside*]: I must think of some appropriate message to send to his majesty King Dushyanta. [*Reflects.*

ŚAKOONTALÁ [*aside to Anasúyá*]: See, see, dear Anasúyá, the poor female Chakraváka-bird, whom cruel fate dooms to nightly separation from her mate, calls to him in mournful notes from the other side of the stream, though he is only hidden from her view by the spreading leaves of the water-lily. Her cry is so piteous that I could almost fancy she was lamenting her hard lot in intelligible words.

ANASÚYÁ: Say not so, dearest.
Fond bird! though sorrow lengthen out her night
Of widowhood, yet with a cry of joy
She hails the morning light that brings her mate
Back to her side. The agony of parting
Would wound us like a sword, but that its edge
Is blunted by the hope of future meeting.

KANWA: Śárngarava, when you have introduced Śakoontalá into the presence of the King, you must give him this message from me.

ŚÁRNGARAVA: Let me hear it, venerable father.

KANWA: This is it—

Most puissant prince! we here present before thee
One thou art bound to cherish and receive
As thine own wife; yea, even to enthrone
As thine own queen—worthy of equal love
With thine imperial consorts. So much, Sire,
We claim of thee as justice due to us,
In virtue of our holy character—
In virtue of thine honorable rank—
In virtue of the pure spontaneous love
That secretly grew up 'twixt thee and her,
Without consent or privity of us.
We ask no more—the rest we freely leave
To thy just feeling and to destiny.

ŚÁRNGARAVA: A most suitable message. I will take care to deliver it correctly.

KANWA: And now, my child, a few words of advice for thee. We hermits, though we live secluded from the world, are not ignorant of worldly matters.

ŚÁRNGARAVA: No, indeed. Wise men are conversant with all subjects.

KANWA: Listen, then, my daughter. When thou reachest thy husband's palace, and art admitted into his family,

Honor thy betters; ever be respectful
To those above thee; and, should others share
Thy husband's love, ne'er yield thyself a prey
To jealousy; but ever be a friend,
A loving friend, to those who rival thee
In his affections. Should thy wedded lord
Treat thee with harshness, thou must never be
Harsh in return, but patient and submissive.
Be to thy menials courteous, and to all
Placed under thee, considerate and kind.
Be never self-indulgent, but avoid
Excess in pleasure; and, when fortune smiles,
Be not puffed up. Thus to thy husband's house
Wilt thou a blessing prove, and not a curse.

What thinks Gautamí of this advice?

GAUTAMÍ: An excellent compendium, truly, of every wife's duties! Lay it well to heart, my daughter.

KANWA: Come, my beloved child, one parting embrace for me and for thy companions, and then we leave thee.

ŚAKOONTALÁ: My father, must Priyamvadá and Anasúyá really return with you? They are very dear to me.

KANWA: Yes, my child; they, too, in good time, will be given in marriage to suitable husbands. It would not be proper for them to accompany thee to such a public place. But Gautamí shall be thy companion.

ŚAKOONTALÁ [*embracing him*]: Removed from thy bosom, my beloved father, like a young tendril of the sandal-tree torn from its home in the western mountains, how shall I be able to support life in a foreign soil?

KANWA: Daughter, thy fears are groundless:—

Soon shall thy lord prefer thee to the rank
Of his own consort; and unnumbered cares
Befitting his imperial dignity
Shall constantly engross thee. Then the bliss
Of bearing him a son—a noble boy,
Bright as the day-star—shall transport thy soul
With new delights, and little shalt thou reck
Of the light sorrow that afflicts thee now
At parting from thy father and thy friends.

[*Śakoontalá throws herself at her foster-father's feet.*

KANWA: Blessings on thee, my child! May all my hopes of thee be realized!

ŚAKOONTALÁ [*approaching her friends*]: Come, my two loved companions, embrace me—both of you together.

PRIYAMVADÁ *and* ANASÚYÁ [*embracing her*]: Dear Śakoontalá, remember, if the King should by any chance be slow in recognizing you, you have only to show him this ring, on which his own name is engraved.

ŚAKOONTALÁ: The bare thought of it puts me in a tremor.

PRIYAMVADÁ *and* ANASÚYÁ: There is no real cause for fear, dearest. Excessive affection is too apt to suspect evil where none exists.

ŚÁRNGARAVA: Come, lady, we must hasten on. The sun is rising in the heavens.

ŚAKOONTALÁ [*looking towards the hermitage*]: Dear father, when shall I ever see this hallowed grove again?

KANWA: I will tell thee; listen—

When thou hast passed a long and blissful life
As King Dushyanta's queen, and jointly shared
With all the earth his ever-watchful care;
And hast beheld thine own heroic son,
Matchless in arms, united to a spouse
In happy wedlock; when his aged sire,
Thy faithful husband, hath to him resigned
The helm of state; then, weary of the world,
Together with Dushyanta thou shalt seek
The calm seclusion of thy former home:—
There amid holy scenes to be at peace,
Till thy pure spirit gain its last release.

GAUTAMÍ: Come, my child, the favorable time for our journey is fast passing. Let thy father return. Venerable Sire, be thou the first to move homewards, or these last words will never end.

KANWA: Daughter, detain me no longer. My religious duties must not be interrupted.

ŚAKOONTALÁ [*again embracing her foster-father*]: Beloved father, thy frame is much enfeebled by penitential exercises. Do not, oh! do not, allow thyself to sorrow too much on my account.

KANWA [*sighing*]: How, O my child, shall my bereavèd heart
Forget its bitterness, when, day by day,
Full in my sight shall grow the tender plants
Reared by thy care, or sprung from hallowed grain
Which thy loved hands have strewn around the door—
A frequent offering to our household gods?

Go, my daughter, and may thy journey be prosperous.
[*Exit Śakoontalá with her escort.*

PRIYAMVADÁ *and* **ANASÚYÁ** [*gazing after Śakoontalá*]: Alas! alas! she is gone, and now the trees hide our darling from our view.

KANWA [*sighing*]: Well, Anasúyá, your sister has departed. Moderate your grief, both of you, and follow me. I go back to the hermitage.

PRIYAMVADÁ *and* **ANASÚYÁ**: Holy father, the sacred grove will be a desert without Śakoontalá. How can we ever return to it?

KANWA: It is natural enough that your affection should make you view it in this light. [*Walking pensively on.*] As for me, I am quite surprised at myself. Now that I have fairly dismissed her to her husband's house, my mind is easy: for indeed,
A daughter is a loan—a precious jewel
Lent to a parent till her husband claim her.
And now that to her rightful lord and master
I have delivered her, my burdened soul
Is lightened, and I seem to breathe more freely. [*Exeunt.*

ACT FIFTH

Scene—A Room in the Palace

The King Dushyanta and the Jester Máthavya are discovered seated.

MÁTHAVYA [*listening*]: Hark! my dear friend, listen a minute, and you will hear sweet sounds proceeding from the music-room. Someone is singing a charming air. Who can it be? Oh! I know. The queen Hansapadiká is practicing her notes, that she may greet you with a new song.

KING: Hush! Let me listen.

A VOICE [*sings behind the scenes*]:
How often hither didst thou rove,
Sweet bee, to kiss the mango's cheek;
Oh! leave not, then, thy early love,
The lily's honeyed lip to seek.

KING: A most impassioned strain, truly!

MÁTHAVYA: Do you understand the meaning of the words?

KING [*smiling*]: She means to reprove me, because I once paid her great attention, and have lately deserted her for the queen Vasumatí. Go, my dear fellow, and tell Hansapadiká from me that I take her delicate reproof as it is intended.

MÁTHAVYA: Very well. [*Rising from his seat.*] But stay—I don't much relish being sent to bear the brunt of her jealousy. The chances are that she will have me seized by the hair of the head and beaten to a jelly. I would as soon expose myself, after a vow of celibacy, to the seductions of a lovely nymph, as encounter the fury of a jealous woman.

KING: Go, go; you can disarm her wrath by a civil speech; but give her my message.

MÁTHAVYA: What must be must be, I suppose. [*Exit.*

KING [*aside*]: Strange! that song has filled me with a most peculiar sensation. A melancholy feeling has come over me, and I seem to yearn after some long-forgotten object of affection. Singular, indeed! but,

Not seldom in our happy hours of ease,
When thought is still, the sight of some fair form,
Or mournful fall of music breathing low,
Will stir strange fancies, thrilling all the soul
With a mysterious sadness, and a sense
Of vague yet earnest longing. Can it be
That the dim memory of events long past,
Or friendships formed in other states of being,
Flits like a passing shadow o'er the spirit?

[*Remains pensive and sad.*

Enter the Chamberlain.

CHAMBERLAIN: Alas! to what an advanced period of life have I attained!

Even this wand betrays the lapse of years;
In youthful days 'twas but a useless badge
And symbol of my office; now it serves
As a support to prop my tottering steps.

Ah me! I feel very unwilling to announce to the King that a deputation of young hermits from the sage Kanwa has arrived, and craves an immediate audience. Certainly, his majesty ought not to neglect a matter of sacred duty, yet I hardly like to trouble him when he has just risen from the judgment-seat. Well, well; a monarch's business is to sustain the world, and he must not expect much repose; because—

Onward, forever onward, in his car
The unwearied Sun pursues his daily course,
Nor tarries to unyoke his glittering steeds.
And ever moving speeds the rushing Wind
Through boundless space, filling the universe
With his life-giving breezes. Day and night,
The King of Serpents on his thousand heads
Upholds the incumbent earth; and even so,
Unceasing toil is aye the lot of kings,
Who, in return, draw nurture from their subjects.

I will therefore deliver my message. [*Walking on and looking about.*] Ah! here comes the King:—

His subjects are his children; through the day,
Like a fond father, to supply their wants,
Incessantly he labors; wearied now,
The monarch seeks seclusion and repose—
E'en as the prince of elephants defies
The sun's fierce heat, and leads the fainting herd
To verdant pastures, ere his wayworn limbs
He yields to rest beneath the cooling shade.

[*Approaching.*] Victory to the King! So please your majesty, some hermits who live in a forest near the Snowy Mountains have arrived here, bringing certain women with them. They have a message to deliver from the sage Kanwa, and desire an audience. I await your Majesty's commands.

KING [*respectfully*]: A message from the sage Kanwa, did you say?

CHAMBERLAIN: Even so, my liege.

KING: Tell my domestic priest, Somaráta, to receive the hermits with due honor, according to the prescribed form. He may then himself introduce them into my presence. I will await them in a place suitable for the reception of such holy guests.

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CHAMBERLAIN: Your Majesty's commands shall be obeyed. [*Exit.*

KING [*rising and addressing the Warder*]: Vetravatí, lead the way to the chamber of the consecrated fire.

WARDER: This way, Sire.

BEST COPY AVAILABL

KING [*walking on, with the air of one oppressed by the cares of government*]: People are generally contented and happy when they have gained their desires; but kings have no sooner attained the object of their aspirations than all their troubles begin.

'Tis a fond thought that to attain the end
And object of ambition is to rest;
Success doth only mitigate the fever
Of anxious expectation; soon the fear
Of losing what we have, tne constant care
Of guarding it doth weary. Ceaseless toil
Must be the lot of him who with his hands
Supports the canopy that shields his subjects.

TWO HERALDS [*behind the scenes*]: May the King be victorious!

FIRST HERALD: Honor to him who labors day by day
For the world's weal, forgetful of his own.
Like some tall tree that with its stately head
Endures the solar beam, while underneath
It yields refreshing shelter to the weary.

SECOND HERALD: Let but the monarch wield his threatening rod
And e'en the guilty tremble; at his voice
The rebel spirit cowers; his grateful subjects
Acknowledge him their guardian; rich and poor
Hail him a faithful friend, a loving kinsman.

KING: Weary as I was before, this complimentary address has refreshed me. [*Walks on.*

WARDER: Here is the terrace of the hallowed fire-chamber, and yonder stands the cow that yields the milk for the oblations. The sacred enclosure has been recently purified, and looks clean and beautiful. Ascend, Sire.

KING [*leans on the shoulders of his attendants, and ascends*]: Vetravatí, what can possibly be the message that the venerable Kanwa has sent me by these hermits?—

Perchance their sacred rites have been disturbed
By demons, or some evil has befallen
The innocent herds, their favorites, that graze
Within the precincts of the hermitage;
Or haply, through my sins, some withering blight
Has nipped the creeping plants that spread their arms
Around the hallowed grove. Such troubled thoughts
Crowd through my mind, and fill me with misgiving.

WARDER: If you ask my opinion, Sire, I think the hermits merely wish to take an opportunity of testifying their loyalty, and are therefore come to offer homage to your Majesty.

Enter the Hermits, leading Śakoontalá, attended by Gautamí; and, in advance of them, the Chamberlain and the domestic Priest.

CHAMBERLAIN: This way, reverend sirs, this way.

ŚÁRNGARAVA: O Śáradwata,

'Tis true the monarch lacks no royal grace,
Nor ever swerves from justice; true, his people,
Yea such as in life's humblest walks are found,
Refrain from evil courses; still to me,
A lonely hermit reared in solitude,
This throng appears bewildering, and methinks
I look upon a burning house, whose inmates
Are running to and fro in wild dismay.

ŚÁRADWATA: It is natural that the first sight of the King's capital should affect you in this manner; my own sensations are very similar.

As one just bathed beholds the man polluted;
As one late purified, the yet impure:—
As one awake looks on the yet unwakened;
Or as the freeman gazes on the thrall,
So I regard this crowd of pleasure-seekers.

ŚAKOONTALÁ [*feeling a quivering sensation in her right eye-lid, and suspecting a bad omen*]: Alas! what means this throbbing of my right eye-lid?

GAUTAMÍ: Heaven avert the evil omen, my child! May the guardian deities of thy husband's family convert it into a sign of good fortune! [*Walks on.*

PRIEST [*pointing to the King*]: Most reverend sirs, there stands the protector of the four classes of the people; the guardian of the four orders of the priesthood. He has just left the judgment-seat, and is waiting for you. Behold him!

ŚÁRNGARAVA: Great Bráhman, we are happy in thinking that the King's power is exerted for the protection of all classes of his subjects. We have not come as petitioners—we have the fullest confidence in the generosity of his nature.

The loftiest trees bend humbly to the ground
Beneath the teeming burden of their fruit;
High in the vernal sky the pregnant clouds
Suspend their stately course, and hanging low,
Scatter their sparkling treasures o'er the earth:—
And such is true benevolence; the good
Are never rendered arrogant by riches.

WARDER: So please your Majesty, I judge from the placid countenance of the hermits that they have no alarming message to deliver.

KING [*looking at Śakoontalá*]: But the lady there—

Who can she be, whose form of matchless grace
Is half concealed beneath her flowing veil?
Among the sombre hermits she appears
Like a fresh bud 'mid sear and yellow leaves.

WARDER: So please your Majesty, my curiosity is also roused, but no conjecture occurs to my mind. This at least is certain, that she deserves to be looked at more closely.

KING: True; but it is not right to gaze at another man's wife.

ŚAKOONTALÁ [*placing her hand on her bosom. Aside*]: O my heart, why this throbbing? Remember thy lord's affection, and take courage.

PRIEST [*advancing*]: These holy men have been received with all due honor. One of them has now a message to deliver from his spiritual superior. Will your Majesty deign to hear it?

KING: I am all attention.

HERMITS [*extending their hands*]: Victory to the King!

KING: Accept my respectful greeting.

HERMITS: May the desires of your soul be accomplished!

KING: I trust no one is molesting you in the prosecution of your religious rites.

HERMITS: Who dares disturb our penitential rites

When thou art our protector? Can the night
Prevail to cast her shadows o'er the earth
While the sun's beams irradiate the sky?

KING: Such, indeed, is the very meaning of my title—"Defender of the Just." I trust the venerable Kanwa is in good health. The world is interested in his well-being.

HERMITS: Holy men have health and prosperity in their own power. He bade us greet your Majesty, and, after kind inquiries, deliver this message.

KING: Let me hear his commands.

ŚÁRNGARAVA: He bade us say that he feels happy in giving his sanction to the marriage which your Majesty contracted with this lady, his daughter, privately and by mutual agreement. Because

By us thou art esteemed the most illustrious
Of noble husbands; and Sakoontalá
Virtue herself in human form revealed.
Great Brahmá hath in equal yoke united
A bride unto a husband worthy of her:—
Henceforth let none make blasphemous complaint
That he is pleased with ill-assorted unions.

Since, therefore, she expects soon to be the mother of thy child, receive her into thy palace, that she may perform, in conjunction with thee, the ceremonies prescribed by religion on such an occasion.

GAUTAMÍ: So please your Majesty, I would add a few words: but why should I intrude my sentiments when an opportunity of speaking my mind hás never been allowed me?

She took no counsel with her kindred; thou
Didst not confer with thine, but all alone
Didst solemnize thy nuptials with thy wife.
Together, then, hold converse; let us leave you.

ŚAKOONTALÁ [*aside*]: Ah! how I tremble for my lord's reply.

KING: What strange proposal is this?

ŚAKOONTALÁ [*aside*]: His words are fire to me.

ŚÁRNGARAVA: What do I hear? Dost thou, then, hesitate? Monarch, thou art well acquainted with the ways of the world, and knowest that

A wife, however virtuous and discreet,
If she live separate from her wedded lord,
Though under shelter of her parent's roof,
Is mark for vile suspicion. Let her dwell
Beside her husband, though he hold her not
In his affection. So her kinsmen will it.

KING: Do you really mean to assert that I married this lady?

ŚAKOONTALÁ [*despondingly. Aside*]: O my heart, thy worst misgivings are confirmed.

ŚÁRNGARAVA: Is it becoming in a monarch to depart from the rules of justice, because he repents of his engagements?

KING: I cannot answer a question which is based on a mere fabrication.

ŚÁRNGARAVA: Such inconstancy is fortunately not common, excepting in men intoxicated by power.

KING: Is that remark aimed at me?

GAUTAMÍ: Be not ashamed, my daughter. Let me remove thy veil for a little space. Thy husband will then recognize thee. [*Removes her veil.*

KING [*gazing at Śakoontalá. Aside*]: What charms are here revealed before mine eyes!

Truly no blemish mars the symmetry
Of that fair form; yet can I ne'er believe
She is my wedded wife; and like a bee
That circles round the flower whose nectared cup
Teems with the dew of morning, I must pause
Ere eagerly I taste the proffered sweetness.

[*Remains wrapped in thought.*

WARDER: How admirably does our royal master's behavior prove his regard for justice! Who else would hesitate for a moment when good fortune offered for his acceptance a form of such rare beauty?

ŚÁRNGARAVA: Great King, why art thou silent?

KING: Holy men, I have revolved the matter in my mind; but the more I think of it, the less able am I to recollect that I ever contracted an alliance with this lady. What answer, then, can I possibly give you when I do not believe myself to be her husband, and I plainly see that she is soon to become a mother?

ŚAKOONTALÁ [*aside*]: Woe! woe! Is our very marriage to be called in question by my own husband? Ah me! is this to be the end of all my bright visions of wedded happiness?

ŚÁRNGARAVA: Beware!

Beware how thou insult the holy Sage!
Remember how he generously allowed
Thy secret union with his foster-child;
And how, when thou didst rob him of his treasure,
He sought to furnish thee excuse, when rather
He should have cursed thee for a ravisher.

ŚÁRADWATA: Śárngarava, speak to him no more. Śakoontalá, our part is performed; we have said all we had to say, and the King has replied in the manner thou hast heard. It is now thy turn to give him convincing evidence of thy marriage.

ŚAKOONTALÁ [*aside*]: Since his feeling towards me has undergone a complete revolution, what will it avail to revive old recollections? One thing is clear—I shall soon have to mourn my own widowhood. [*Aloud.*] My revered husband—— [*Stops short.*] But no—I dare not address thee by this title, since thou hast refused to acknowledge our union. Noble descendant of Puru! It is not worthy of thee to betray an innocent-minded girl, and disown her in such terms, after having so lately and so solemnly plighted thy vows to her in the hermitage.

KING [*stopping his ears*]: I will hear no more. Be such a crime far from my thoughts!

What evil spirit can possess thee, lady,
That thou dost seek to sully my good name
By base aspersions? like a swollen torrent,
That, leaping from its narrow bed, o'erthrows
The tree upon its bank, and strives to blend
Its turbid waters with the crystal stream?

ŚAKOONTALÁ: If, then, thou really believest me to be the wife of another, and thy present conduct proceeds from some cloud that obscures thy recollection, I will easily convince thee by this token.

KING: An excellent idea!

ŚAKOONTALÁ [*feeling for the ring*]: Alas! alas! woe is me! There is no ring on my finger!

[*Looks with anguish at Gautamí.*

GAUTAMÍ: The ring must have slipped off when thou wast in the act of offering homage to the holy water of Sachí's sacred pool, near Sakrávatára.

KING [*smiling*]: People may well talk of the readiness of woman's invention! Here is an instance of it.

ŚAKOONTALÁ: Say, rather, of the omnipotence of fate. I will mention another circumstance, which may yet convince thee.

KING: By all means let me hear it at once.

ŚAKOONTALÁ: One day, while we were seated in a jasmine bower, thou didst pour into the hollow of thine hand some water, sprinkled by a recent shower in the cup of a lotus blossom——

KING: I am listening; proceed.

ŚAKOONTALÁ: At that instant, my adopted child, the little fawn, with soft, long eyes, came running towards us. Upon which, before tasting the water thyself, thou didst kindly offer some to the little creature, saying fondly—"Drink first, gentle fawn." But she could not be induced to drink from the hand of a stranger; though immediately afterwards, when I took the water in my own hand, she drank with perfect confidence. Then, with a smile, thou didst say—"Every creature confides naturally in its own kind. You are both inhabitants of the same forest, and have learnt to trust each other."

KING: Voluptuaries may allow themselves to be seduced from the path of duty by falsehoods such as these, expressed in honeyed words.

GAUTAMÍ: Speak not thus, illustrious Prince. This lady was brought up in a hermitage, and has never learnt deceit.

KING: Holy matron,

E'en in untutored brutes, the female sex
Is marked by inborn subtlety—much more
In beings gifted with intelligence.
The wily Köil, ere towards the sky
She wings her sportive flight, commits her eggs
To other nests, and artfully consigns
The rearing of her little ones to strangers.

ŚAKOONTALÁ [*angrily*]: Dishonorable man, thou judgest of others by thine own evil heart. Thou, at least, art unrivalled in perfidy, and standest alone—a base deceiver in the garb of virtue and religion—like a deep pit whose yawning mouth is concealed by smiling flowers.

KING [*aside*]: Her anger, at any rate, appears genuine, and makes me almost doubt whether I am in the right. For, indeed,

When I had vainly searched my memory,
And so with stern severity denied

The fabled story of our secret loves,
Her brows, that met before in graceful curves,
Like the arched weapon of the god of love,
Seemed by her frown dissevered; while the fire
Of sudden anger kindled in her eyes.

[*Aloud.*] My good lady, Dushyanta's character is well-known to all. I comprehend not your meaning.

ŚAKOONTALÁ: Well do I deserve to be thought a harlot for having, in the innocence of my heart, and out of the confidence I reposed in a Prince of Puru's race, intrusted my honor to a man whose mouth distils honey, while his heart is full of poison.

[*Covers her face with her mantle, and bursts into tears.*

ŚÁRNGARAVA: Thus is it that burning remorse must ever follow rash actions which might have been avoided, and for which one has only one's self to blame.

Not hastily should marriage be contracted,
And specially in secret. Many a time,
In hearts that know not each the other's fancies,
Fond love is changed into most bitter hate.

KING: How now! Do you give credence to this woman rather than to me, that you heap such accusations on me?

ŚÁRNGARAVA [*sarcastically*]: That would be too absurd, certainly. You have heard the proverb—

Hold in contempt the innocent words of those
Who from their infancy have known no guile:—
But trust the treacherous counsels of the man
Who makes a very science of deceit.

KING: Most veracious Bráhman, grant that you are in the right, what end would be gained by betraying this lady?

ŚÁRNGARAVA: Ruin.

KING: No one will believe that a Prince of Puru's race would seek to ruin others or himself.

ŚÁRADWATA: This altercation is idle, Śárngarava. We have executed the commission of our preceptor; come, let us return. [*To the King.*

Śakoontalá is certainly thy bride;
Receive her or reject her, she is thine.
Do with her, King, according to thy pleasure—
The husband o'er the wife is absolute.

Go on before us, Gautamí. [*They move away.*

ŚAKOONTALÁ: What! is it not enough to have been betrayed by this perfidious man? Must you also forsake me, regardless of my tears and lamentations?

[*Attempts to follow them.*

GAUTAMÍ [*stopping*]: My son Śárngarava, see, Śakoontalá is following us, and with tears implores us not to leave her. Alas! poor child, what will she do here with a cruel husband who casts her from him?

ŚÁRŃGARAVA [*turning angrily towards her*]: Wilful woman, dost thou seek to be independent of thy lord?

[*Śakoontalá trembles with fear.*

ŚÁRNGARAVA: Sakoontalá!

If thou art really what the King proclaims thee,
How can thy father e'er receive thee back
Into his house and home? but, if thy conscience
Be witness to thy purity of soul,
E'en should thy husband to a handmaid's lot
Condemn thee, thou may'st cheerfully endure it,
When ranked among the number of his household.

Thy duty, therefore, is to stay. As for us, we must return immediately.

KING: Deceive not the lady, my good hermit, by any such expectations.

The moon expands the lotus of the night,
The rising sun awakes the lily; each
Is with his own contented. Even so
The virtuous man is master of his passions,
And from another's wife averts his gaze.

ŚÁRNGARAVA: Since thy union with another woman has rendered thee oblivious of thy marriage with Sakoontalá, whence this fear of losing thy character for constancy and virtue?

KING [*to the Priest*]: You must counsel me, revered sir, as to my course of action. Which of the two evils involves the greater or less sin?

Whether by some dark veil my mind be clouded,
Or this designing woman speak untruly,
I know not. Tell me, must I rather be
The base disowner of my wedded wife,
Or the defiling and defiled adulterer?

PRIEST [*after deliberation*]: You must take an intermediate course.

KING: What course, revered sir? Tell me at once.

PRIEST: I will provide an asylum for the lady in my own house until the birth of her child; and my reason, if you ask me, is this. Soothsayers have predicted that your first-born will have universal dominion. Now, if the hermit's daughter bring forth a son with the discus or mark of empire in the lines of his hand, you must admit her immediately into your royal apartments with great rejoicings; if not, then determine to send her back as soon as possible to her father.

KING: I bow to the decision of my spiritual adviser.

PRIEST: Daughter, follow me.

ŚAKOONTALÁ: O divine earth, open and receive me into thy bosom!

[*Exit Śakoontalá weeping, with the Priest and the Hermits. The King remains absorbed in thinking of her, though the curse still clouds his recollection.*

A VOICE [*behind the scenes*]: A miracle! a miracle!

KING [*listening*]: What has happened now?

PRIEST [*entering with an air of astonishment*]: Great Prince, a stupendous prodigy has just occurred!

KING: What is it?

PRIEST: May it please your Majesty, so soon as Kanwa's pupils had departed,
Śakoontalá, her eyes all bathed in tears,
With outstretched arms bewailed her cruel fate——

KING: Well, well, what happened then?

PRIEST: When suddenly a shining apparition,
In female shape, descended from the skies,
Near the nymphs' pool, and bore her up to heaven.
[*All remain motionless with astonishment.*

KING: My good priest, from the very first I declined having anything to do with this matter. It is now all over, and we can never, by our conjectures, unravel the mystery; let it rest; go, seek repose.

PRIEST [*looking at the King*]: Be it so. Victory to the King! [*Exit.*

KING: Vetravatí, I am tired out; lead the way to the bed-chamber.

WARDER: This way, Sire. [*They move away.*

KING: Do what I will, I cannot call to mind
That I did e'er espouse the sage's daughter—
Therefore I have disowned her; yet 'tis strange
How painfully my agitated heart
Bears witness to the truth of her assertion,
And makes me credit her against my judgment. [*Exeunt.*

PRELUDE TO ACT SIXTH

Scene—A Street

Enter the King's brother-in-law as Superintendent of the city police; and with him two Constables, dragging a poor fisherman, who has his hands tied behind his back.

BOTH THE CONSTABLES [*striking the prisoner*]: Take that for a rascally thief that you are; and now tell us, sirrah, where you found this ring—aye, the King's own signet-ring. See, here is the royal name engraved on the setting of the jewel.

FISHERMAN [*with a gesture of alarm*]: Mercy! kind sirs, mercy! I did not steal it; indeed I did not.

FIRST CONSTABLE: Oh! then I suppose the King took you for some fine Bráhman, and made you a present of it?

FISHERMAN: Only hear me. I am but a poor fisherman, living at Śakrávatára——

SECOND CONSTABLE: Scoundrel, who ever asked you, pray, for a history of your birth and parentage?

SUPERINTENDENT [*to one of the Constables*]: Súchaka, let the fellow tell his own story from the beginning. Don't interrupt him.

BOTH CONSTABLES: As you please, master. Go on, then, sirrah, and say what you've got to say.

FISHERMAN: You see in me a poor man, who supports his family by catching fish with nets, hooks, and the like.

SUPERINTENDENT [*laughing*]: A most refined occupation, certainly!

FISHERMAN: Blame me not for it, master.

The father's occupation, though despised
By others, casts no shame upon the son,
And he should not forsake it. Is the priest
Who kills the animal for sacrifice
Therefore deemed cruel? Sure a lowborn man
May, though a fisherman, be tender-hearted.

SUPERINTENDENT: Well, well; go on with your story.

FISHERMAN: One day I was cutting open a large carp I had just hooked, when the sparkle of a jewel caught my eye, and what should I find in the fish's maw but that ring! Soon afterwards, when I was offering it for sale, I was seized by your honors. Now you know everything. Whether you kill me, or whether you let me go, this is the true account of how the ring came into my possession.

SUPERINTENDENT [*to one of the Constables*]: Well, Jánuka, the rascal emits such a fishy odor that I have no doubt of his being a fisherman; but we must inquire a little more closely into this queer story about the finding of the ring. Come, we'll take him before the King's household.

BOTH CONSTABLES: Very good, master. Get on with you, you cut-purse. [*All move on.*

SUPERINTENDENT: Now attend, Súchaka; keep you guard here at the gate; and hark ye, sirrahs, take good care your prisoner does not escape, while I go in and lay the whole story of the discovery of this ring before the King in person. I will soon return and let you know his commands.

CONSTABLE: Go in, master, by all means; and may you find favor in the King's sight! [*Exit Superintendent.*

FIRST CONSTABLE [*after an interval*]: I say, Jámuka, the Superintendent is a long time away.

SECOND CONSTABLE: Aye, aye; kings are not to be got at so easily. Folks must bide the proper opportunity.

FIRST CONSTABLE: Jánuka, my fingers itch to strike the first blow at this royal victim here. We must kill him with all the honors, you know. I long to begin binding the flowers round his head.

[*Pretends to strike a blow at the fisherman.*

FISHERMAN: Your honor surely will not put an innocent man to a cruel death.

SECOND CONSTABLE [*looking*]: There's our Superintendent at last, I declare. See, he is coming towards us with a paper in his hand. We shall soon know the King's command; so prepare, my fine fellow, either to become food for the vultures, or to make acquaintance with some hungry cur.

SUPERINTENDENT [*entering*]: Ho, there, Súchaka! set the fisherman at liberty, I tell you. His story about the ring is all correct.

SÚCHAKA: Oh! very good, sir; as you please.

SECOND CONSTABLE: The fellow had one foot in hell, and now here he is in the land of the living. [*Releases him.*

FISHERMAN [*bowing to the Superintendent*]: Now, master, what think you of my way of getting a livelihood?

SUPERINTENDENT: Here, my good man, the King desired me to present you with this purse. It contains a sum of money equal to the full value of the ring.

[*Gives him the money.*

FISHERMAN [*taking it and bowing*]: His Majesty does me too great honor.

SÚCHAKA: You may well say so. He might as well have taken you from the gallows to seat you on his state elephant.

JÁNUKA: Master, the King must value the ring very highly, or he would never have sent such a sum of money to this ragamuffin.

SUPERINTENDENT: I don't think he prizes it as a costly jewel so much as a memorial of some person he tenderly loves. The moment it was shown to him he became much agitated, though in general he conceals his feelings.

SÚCHAKA: Then you must have done a great service——

JÁNUKA: Yes, to this husband of a fish-wife.

[*Looks enviously at the fisherman.*

FISHERMAN: Here's half the money for you, my masters. It will serve to purchase the flowers you spoke of, if not to buy me your good-will.

JÁNUKA: Well, now, that's just as it should be.

SUPERINTENDENT: My good fisherman, you are an excellent fellow, and I begin to feel quite a regard for you. Let us seal our first friendship over a glass of good liquor. Come along to the next wine-shop and we'll drink your health.

ALL: By all means. [*Exeunt.*

ACT SIXTH

Scene—The Garden of the Palace

The nymph Sánumatí is seen descending in a celestial car.

SÁNUMATÍ: Behold me just arrived from attending in my proper turn at the nymphs' pool, where I have left the other nymphs to perform their ablutions, whilst I seek to ascertain, with my own eyes, how it fares with King Dushyanta. My connection with the nymph Menaká has made her daughter Sakoontalá dearer to me than my own flesh and blood; and Menaká it was who charged me with this errand on her daughter's behalf. [*Looking round in all directions.*] How is it that I see no preparations in the King's household for celebrating the great vernal festival? I could easily discover the reason by my divine faculty of meditation; but respect must be shown to the wishes of my friend. How then shall I arrive at the truth? I know what I will do. I will become invisible, and place myself near those two maidens who are tending the plants in the garden.

[*Descends and takes her station.*

Enter a Maiden, who stops in front of a mango-tree and gazes at the blossom. Another Maiden is seen behind her.

FIRST MAIDEN: Hail to thee, lovely harbinger of spring!
The varied radiance of thy opening flowers
Is welcome to my sight. I bid thee hail,
Sweet mango, soul of this enchanting season.

SECOND MAIDEN: Parabaitiká, what are you saying there to yourself?

FIRST MAIDEN: Dear Madhukariká, am I not named after the Köil?[9] and does not the Köil sing for joy at the first appearance of the mango-blossom?

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[9] The Köil is the Indian cuckoo. It is sometimes called Parabhrita (nourished by another) because the female is known to leave her eggs in the nest of the crow to be hatched. The bird is a great favorite with the Indian poets, as the nightingale with Europeans.

SECOND MAIDEN: [*approaching hastily, with transport*]: What! is spring really come?

FIRST MAIDEN: Yes, indeed, Madhukariká, and with it the season of joy, love, and song.

SECOND MAIDEN: Let me lean upon you, dear, while I stand on tip-toe and pluck a blossom of the mango, that I may present it as an offering to the god of love.

FIRST MAIDEN: Provided you let me have half the reward which the god will bestow in return.

SECOND MAIDEN: To be sure you shall, and that without asking. Are we not one in heart and soul, though divided in body? [*Leans on her friend and plucks a mango-blossom.*] Ah! here is a bud just bursting into flower. It diffuses a delicious perfume, though not yet quite expanded. [*Joining her hands reverentially.*

God of the bow, who with spring's choicest flowers
Dost point thy five unerring shafts; to thee
I dedicate this blossom; let it serve
To barb thy truest arrow; be its mark
Some youthful heart that pines to be beloved.

[*Throws down a mango-blossom.*

CHAMBERLAIN [*entering in a hurried manner, angrily*]: Hold there, thoughtless woman. What are you about, breaking off those mango-blossoms, when the King has forbidden the celebration of the spring festival?

BOTH MAIDENS [*alarmed*]: Pardon us, kind sir, we have heard nothing of it.

CHAMBERLAIN: You have heard nothing of it? Why, all the vernal plants and shrubs, and the very birds that lodge in their branches, show more respect to the King's order than you do.

Yon mango-blossoms, though long since expanded,
Gather no down upon their tender crests;
The flower still lingers in the amaranth,
Imprisoned in its bud; the tuneful Köil,
Though winter's chilly dews be overpast,
Suspends the liquid volume of his song
Scarce uttered in his throat; e'en Love, dismayed,
Restores the half-drawn arrow to his quiver.

BOTH MAIDENS: The mighty power of King Dushyanta is not to be disputed.

FIRST MAIDEN: It is but a few days since Mitrávasu, the King's brother-in-law, sent us to wait upon his Majesty; and, during the whole of our sojourn here, we have been intrusted with the charge of the royal pleasure-grounds. We are therefore strangers in this place, and heard nothing of the order until you informed us of it.

CHAMBERLAIN: Well then, now you know it, take care you don't continue your preparations.

BOTH MAIDENS: But tell us, kind sir, why has the King prohibited the usual festivities? We are curious to hear, if we may.

SÁNUMATÍ [*aside*]: Men are naturally fond of festive entertainments. There must be some good reason for the prohibition.

CHAMBERLAIN: The whole affair is now public; why should I not speak of it! Has not the gossip about the King's rejection of Śakoontalá reached your ears yet?

BOTH MAIDENS: Oh yes, we heard the story from the King's brother-in-law, as far, at least, as the discovery of the ring.

CHAMBERLAIN: Then there is little more to tell you. As soon as the King's memory was restored by the sight of his own ring, he exclaimed, "Yes, it is all true. I remember now my secret marriage with Śakoontalá. When I repudiated her, I had lost my recollection." Ever since that moment, he has yielded himself a prey to the bitterest remorse.

He loathes his former pleasures; he rejects
The daily homage of his ministers.
On his lone couch he tosses to and fro,
Courting repose in vain. Whene'er he meets
The ladies of his palace, and would fain
Address them with politeness, he confounds
Their names; or, calling them "Śakoontalá,"
Is straightway silent and abashed with shame.

SÁNUMATÍ [*aside*]: To me this account is delightful.

CHAMBERLAIN: In short, the King is so completely out of his mind that the festival has been prohibited.

BOTH MAIDENS: Perfectly right.

A VOICE [*behind the scenes*]: The King! the King! This way, Sire, this way.

CHAMBERLAIN [*listening*]: Oh! here comes his majesty in this direction. Pass on, maidens; attend to your duties.

BOTH MAIDENS: We will, sir. [*Exeunt.*

Enter King Dushyanta, dressed in deep mourning, attended by his Jester, Máthavya, and preceded by Vetravatí.

CHAMBERLAIN [*gazing at the King*]: Well, noble forms are certainly pleasing, under all varieties of outward circumstances. The King's person is as charming as ever, notwithstanding his sorrow of mind.

Though but a single golden bracelet spans
His wasted arm; though costly ornaments

Have given place to penitential weeds;
Though oft-repeated sighs have blanched his lips,
And robbed them of their bloom; though sleepless care
And carking thought have dimmed his beaming eye;
Yet does his form, by its inherent lustre,
Dazzle the gaze; and, like a priceless gem
Committed to some cunning polisher,
Grow more effulgent by the loss of substance.

SÁNUMATÍ [*aside. Looking at the King*]: Now that I have seen him, I can well understand why Sakoontalá should pine after such a man, in spite of his disdainful rejection of her.

KING [*walking slowly up and down, in deep thought*]:
When fatal lethargy o'erwhelmed my soul,
My loved one strove to rouse me, but in vain:—
And now when I would fain in slumber deep
Forget myself, full soon remorse doth wake me.

SÁNUMATÍ [*aside*]: My poor Sakoontalá's sufferings are very similar.

MÁTHAVYA [*aside*]: He is taken with another attack of this odious Sakoontalá fever. How shall we ever cure him?

CHAMBERLAIN [*approaching*]: Victory to the King! Great Prince, the royal pleasure-grounds have been put in order. Your Majesty can resort to them for exercise and amusement whenever you think proper.

KING: Vetravatí, tell the worthy Piśuna, my prime minister, from me, that I am so exhausted by want of sleep that I cannot sit on the judgment-seat to-day. If any case of importance be brought before the tribunal he must give it his best attention, and inform me of the circumstances by letter.

VETRAVATÍ: Your Majesty's commands shall be obeyed.

[*Exit.*

KING [*to the Chamberlain*]: And you, Vátáyana, may go about your own affairs.

CHAMBERLAIN: I will, Sire. [*Exit.*

MÁTHAVYA: Now that you have rid yourself of these troublesome fellows, you can enjoy the delightful coolness of your pleasure-grounds without interruption.

KING: Ah! my dear friend, there is an old adage—"When affliction has a mind to enter, she will find a crevice somewhere"—and it is verified in me.

Scarce is my soul delivered from the cloud
That darkened its remembrance of the past,
When lo! the heart-born deity of love
With yonder blossom of the mango barbs
His keenest shaft, and aims it at my breast.

MÁTHAVYA: Well, then, wait a moment; I will soon demolish Master Káma's arrow with a cut of my cane.

[Raises his stick and strikes off the mango-blossom.

KING [*smiling*]: That will do. I see very well the god of Love is not a match for a Bráhman. And now, my dear friend, where shall I sit down, that I may enchant my sight by gazing on the twining plants, which seem to remind me of the graceful shape of my beloved?

MÁTHAVYA: Do you not remember? you told Chaturiká you should pass the heat of the day in the jasmine bower; and commanded her to bring the likeness of your queen Śakoontalá, sketched with your own hand.

KING: True. The sight of her picture will refresh my soul. Lead the way to the arbor.

MÁTHAVYA: This way, Sire.

[Both move on, followed by Sánumatí.

MÁTHAVYA: Here we are at the jasmine bower. Look, it has a marble seat, and seems to bid us welçome with its offerings of delicious flowers. You have only to enter and sit down. *[Both enter and seat themselves.*

SÁNUMATÍ [*aside*]: I will lean against these young jasmines. I can easily, from behind them, glance at my friend's picture, and will then hasten to inform her of her husband's ardent affection.

[Stands leaning against the creepers.

KING: Oh! my dear friend, how vividly all the circumstances of my union with Śakoontalá present themselves to my recollection at this moment! But tell me now how it was that, between the time of my leaving her in the hermitage and my subsequent rejection of her, you never breathed her name to me! True, you were not by my side when I disowned her; but I had confided to you the story of my love and you were acquainted with every particular. Did it pass out of your mind as it did out of mine?

MÁTHAVYA: No, no; trust me for that. But, if you remember, when you had finished telling me about it, you added that I was not to take the story in earnest, for that you were not really in love with a country girl, but were only jesting; and I was dull and thick-headed enough to believe you. But so fate decreed, and there is no help for it.

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SÁNUMATÍ [*aside*]: Exactly.

KING [*after deep thought*]: My dear friend, suggest some relief for my misery.

MÁTHAVYA: Come, come, cheer up; why do you give way? Such weakness is unworthy of you. Great men never surrender themselves to uncontrolled grief. Do not mountains remain unshaken even in a gale of wind?

KING: How can I be otherwise than inconsolable, when I call to mind the agonized demeanor of the dear one on the occasion of my disowning her?

When cruelly I spurned her from my presence,
She fain had left me; but the young recluse,
Stern as the Sage, and with authority
As from his saintly master, in a voice
That brooked not contradiction, bade her stay.
Then through her pleading eyes, bedimmed with tears,
She cast on me one long reproachful look,
Which like a poisoned shaft torments me still.

SÁNUMATÍ [*aside*]: Alas! such is the force of self-reproach following a rash action. But his anguish only rejoices me.

MÁTHAVYA: An idea has just struck me. I should not wonder if some celestial being had carried her off to heaven.

KING: Very likely. Who else would have dared to lay a finger on a wife, the idol of her husband? It is said that Menaká, the nymph of heaven, gave her birth. The suspicion has certainly crossed my mind that some of her celestial companions may have taken her to their own abode.

SÁNUMATÍ [*aside*]: His present recollection of every circumstance of her history does not surprise me so much as his former forgetfulness.

MÁTHAVYA: If that's the case, you will be certain to meet her before long.

KING: Why?

MÁTHAVYA: No father and mother can endure to see a daughter suffering the pain of separation from her husband.

KING: Oh! my dear Máthavya,

Was it a dream? or did some magic dire,
Dulling my senses with a strange delusion,
O'ercome my spirit? or did destiny,
Jealous of my good actions, mar their fruit,
And rob me of their guerdon? It is past,
Whate'er the spell that bound me. Once again
Am I awake, but only to behold
The precipice o'er which my hopes have fallen.

MÁTHAVYA: Do not despair in this manner. Is not this very ring a proof that what has been lost may be unexpectedly found?

KING [*gazing at the ring*]: Ah! this ring, too, has fallen from a station which it will not easily regain, and deserves all my sympathy.

O gem, deserved the punishment we suffer,
And equal is the merit of our works,
When such our common doom. Thou didst enjoy
The thrilling contact of those slender fingers,
Bright as the dawn; and now how changed thy lot!

SÁNUMATÍ [*aside*]: Had it found its way to the hand of any other person, then indeed its fate would have been deplorable.

MÁTHAVYA: Pray, how did the ring ever come upon her hand at all?

SÁNUMATÍ: I myself am curious to know.

KING: You shall hear. When I was leaving my beloved Sakoontalá that I might return to my own capital, she said to me, with tears in her eyes, "How long will it be ere my lord send for me to his palace and make me his queen?"

MÁTHAVYA: Well, what was your reply?

KING: Then I placed the ring on her finger, and thus addressed her—

Repeat each day one letter of the name
Engraven on this gem; ere thou hast reckoned
The tale of syllables, my minister
Shall come to lead thee to thy husband's palace.

But, hard-hearted man that I was, I forgot to fulfil my promise, owing to the infatuation that took possession of me.

SÁNUMATÍ [*aside*]: A pleasant arrangement! Fate, however, ordained that the appointment should not be kept.

MÁTHAVYA: But how did the ring contrive to pass into the stomach of that carp which the fisherman caught and was cutting up?

KING: It must have slipped from my Sakoontalá's hand, and fallen into the stream of the Ganges, while she was offering homage to the water of Sachí's holy pool.

MÁTHAVYA: Very likely.

SÁNUMATÍ [*aside*]: Hence it happened, I suppose, that the King, always fearful of committing the least injustice, came to doubt his marriage with my poor Sakoontalá. But why should affection so strong as his stand in need of any token of recognition?

KING: Let me now address a few words of reproof to this ring.

MÁTHAVYA [*aside*]: He is going stark mad, I verily believe.

KING: Hear me, thou dull and undiscerning bauble!

For so it argues thee, that thou couldst leave
The slender fingers of her hand, to sink
Beneath the waters. Yet what marvel is it

That thou shouldst lack discernment? let me rather
Heap curses on myself, who, though endowed
With reason, yet rejected her I loved.

MÁTHAVYA [*aside*]: And so, I suppose, I must stand here to be devoured by hunger, whilst he goes on in this sentimental strain.

KING: O forsaken one, unjustly banished from my presence, take pity on thy slave, whose heart is consumed by the fire of remorse, and return to my sight.

Enter Chaturiká hurriedly, with a picture in her hand.

CHATURIKÁ: Here is the Queen's portrait. [*Shows the picture.*

MÁTHAVYA: Excellent, my dear friend, excellent! The imitation of nature is perfect, and the attitude of the figures is really charming. They stand out in such bold relief that the eye is quite deceived.

SÁNUMATÍ [*aside*]: A most artistic performance! I admire the King's skill, and could almost believe that Sakoontalá herself was before me.

KING: I own 'tis not amiss, though it portrays
But feebly her angelic loveliness.
Aught less than perfect is depicted falsely,
And fancy must supply the imperfection.

SÁNUMATÍ [*aside*]: A very just remark from a modest man, whose affection is exaggerated by the keenness of his remorse.

MÁTHAVYA: Tell me—I see three female figures drawn on the canvas, and all of them beautiful; which of the three is her Majesty, Sakoontalá?

SÁNUMATÍ [*aside*]: If he cannot distinguish her from the others, the simpleton might as well have no eyes in his head.

KING: Which should you imagine to be intended for her?

MÁTHAVYA: She who is leaning, apparently a little tired, against the stem of that mango-tree, the tender leaves of which glitter with the water she has poured upon them. Her arms are gracefully extended; her face is somewhat flushed with the heat; and a few flowers have escaped from her hair, which has become unfastened, and hangs in loose tresses about her neck. That must be the queen Sakoontalá, and the others, I presume, are her two attendants.

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KING: I congratulate you on your discernment. Behold the proof of my passion;

My finger, burning with the glow of love,
Has left its impress on the painted tablet;
While here and there, alas! a scalding tear

Has fallen on the cheek and dimmed its brightness.

Chaturiká, the garden in the background of the picture is only half-painted. Go, fetch the brush that I may finish it.

CHATURIKÁ: Worthy Máthavya, have the kindness to hold the picture until I return.

KING: Nay, I will hold it myself.

[*Takes the picture. Exit Chaturiká.*

KING: My loved one came but lately to my presence
And offered me herself, but in my folly
I spurned the gift, and now I fondly cling
To her mere image; even as a madman
Would pass the waters of the gushing stream,
And thirst for airy vapors of the desert.

MÁTHAVYA [*aside*]: He has been fool enough to forego the reality for the semblance, the substance for the shadow. [*Aloud.*] Tell us, pray, what else remains to be painted.

SÁNUMATÍ [*aside*]: He longs, no doubt, to delineate some favorite spot where my dear Sakoontalá delighted to ramble.

KING: You shall hear——
I wish to see the Máliní portrayed,
Its tranquil course by banks of sand impeded—
Upon the brink a pair of swans: beyond,
The hills adjacent to Himálaya,
Studded with deer; and, near the spreading shade
Of some large tree, where 'mid the branches hang
The hermits' vests of bark, a tender doe,
Rubbing its downy forehead on the horn
Of a black antelope, should be depicted.

MÁTHAVYA [*aside*]: Pooh! if I were he, I would fill up the vacant spaces with a lot of grizzly-bearded old hermits.

KING: My dear Máthavya, there is still a part of Sakoontalá's dress which I purposed to draw, but find I have omitted.

MÁTHAVYA: What is that?

SÁNUMATÍ [*aside*]: Something suitable, I suppose, to the simple attire of a young and beautiful girl dwelling in a forest.

KING: A sweet Sirísha blossom should be twined
Behind her ear, its perfumed crest depending
Towards her cheek; and, resting on her bosom,
A lotus-fibre necklace, soft and bright
As an autumnal moon-beam, should be traced.

MÁTHAVYA: Pray, why does the Queen cover her lips with the tips of her fingers, bright as the blossom of a lily, as if she were afraid of something? [*Looking more closely.*] Oh! I see; a vagabond bee, intent on thieving the honey of flowers, has mistaken her mouth for a rose-bud, and is trying to settle upon it.

KING: A bee! drive off the impudent insect, will you?

MÁTHAVYA: That's your business. Your royal prerogative gives you power over all offenders.

KING: Very true. Listen to me, thou favorite guest of flowering plants; why give thyself the trouble of hovering here?

See where thy partner sits on yonder flower,
And waits for thee ere she will sip its dew.

SÁNUMATÍ [*aside*]: A most polite way of warning him off!

MÁTHAVYA: You'll find the obstinate creature is not to be sent about his business so easily as you think.

KING: Dost thou presume to disobey? Now hear me—

An thou but touch the lips of my beloved,
Sweet as the opening blossom, whence I quaffed
In happier days love's nectar, I will place thee
Within the hollow of yon lotus cup,
And there imprison thee for thy presumption.

MÁTHAVYA: He must be bold indeed not to show any fear when you threaten him with such an awful punishment. [*Smiling, aside.*] He is stark mad, that's clear; and I believe, by keeping him company, I am beginning to talk almost as wildly. [*Aloud.*] Look, it is only a painted bee.

KING: Painted? impossible!

SÁNUMATÍ [*aside*]: Even I did not perceive it; how much less should he?

KING: Oh! my dear friend, why were you so ill-natured as to tell me the truth?

While, all entranced, I gazed upon her picture,
My loved one seemed to live before my eyes,
Till every fibre of my being thrilled
With rapturous emotion. Oh! 'twas cruel
To dissipate the day-dream, and transform
The blissful vision to a lifeless image. [*Sheds tears.*

SÁNUMATÍ [*aside*]: Separated lovers are very difficult to please; but he seems more difficult than usual.

KING: Alas! my dear Máthavya, why am I doomed to be the victim of perpetual disappointment?

Vain is the hope of meeting her in dreams,
For slumber night by night forsakes my couch:
And now that I would fain assuage my grief
By gazing on her portrait here before me,
Tears of despairing love obscure my sight.

SÁNUMATÍ [*aside*]: You have made ample amends for the wrong you did Śakoontalá in disowning her.

CHATURIKÁ [*entering*]: Victory to the King! I was coming along with the box of colors in my hand——

KING: What now?

CHATURIKÁ: When I met the Queen Vasumatí, attended by Taraliká. She insisted on taking it from me, and declared she would herself deliver it into your Majesty's hands.

MÁTHAVYA: By what luck did you contrive to escape her?

CHATURIKÁ: While her maid was disengaging her mantle, which had caught in the branch of a shrub, I ran away.

KING: Here, my good friend, take the picture and conceal it. My attentions to the Queen have made her presumptuous. She will be here in a minute.

MÁTHAVYA: Conceal the picture! conceal myself, you mean. [*Getting up and taking the picture.*] The Queen has a bitter draught in store for you, which you will have to swallow as Siva did the poison at the Deluge. When you are well quit of her, you may send and call me from the Palace of Clouds,[10] where I shall take refuge. [*Exit, running.*

SÁNUMATÍ [*aside*]: Although the King's affections are transferred to another object, yet he respects his previous attachments. I fear his love must be somewhat fickle.

VETRAVATÍ [*entering with a despatch in her hand*]: Victory to the King!

KING: Vetravatí, did you observe the Queen Vasumatí coming in this direction?

VETRAVATÍ: I did; but when she saw that I had a despatch in my hand for your Majesty, she turned back.

KING: The Queen has too much regard for propriety to interrupt me when I am engaged with state-affairs.

VETRAVATÍ: So please your Majesty, your Prime Minister begs respectfully to inform you that he has devoted much time to the settlement of financial calculations, and only one case of importance has been submitted by the citizens for his consideration. He has made a written report of the facts, and requests your Majesty to cast your eyes over it.

KING: Hand me the paper. [*Vetravatí delivers it.*

KING [*reading*]: What have we here? "A merchant named Dhanamitra, trading by sea, was lost in a late shipwreck. Though a wealthy trader, he was childless; and the whole of his immense property becomes by law forfeited to the King." So writes the minister. Alas! alas! for his childlessness. But surely, if he was wealthy, he must have had many wives. Let an inquiry be made whether any one of them is expecting to give birth to a child.

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[10] Palace of King Dushyanta, so-called because it was as lofty as the clouds.

VETRAVATÍ: They say that his wife, the daughter of the foreman of a guild belonging to Ayodhyá, has just completed the ceremonies usual upon such expectations.

KING: The unborn child has a title to his father's property. Such is my decree. Go, bid my minister proclaim it so.

VETRAVATÍ: I will, my liege. [*Going.*

KING: Stay a moment.

VETRAVATÍ: I am at your Majesty's service.

KING: Let there be no question whether he may or may not have left offspring;

Rather be it proclaimed that whosoe'er
Of King Dushyanta's subjects be bereaved
Of any loved relation, an it be not
That his estates are forfeited for crimes,
Dushyanta will himself to them supply
That kinsman's place in tenderest affection.

VETRAVATÍ: It shall be so proclaimed.

[*Exit Vetravatí, and reënter after an interval.*

VETRAVATÍ: Your Majesty's proclamation was received with acclamations of joy, like grateful rain at the right season.

KING [*drawing a deep sigh*]: So then, the property of rich men, who have no lineal descendants, passes over to a stranger at their decease. And such, alas! must be the fate of the fortunes of the race of Puru at my death; even as when fertile soil is sown with seed at the wrong season.

VETRAVATÍ: Heaven forbid!

KING: Fool that I was to reject such happiness when it offered itself for my acceptance!

SÁNUMATÍ [*aside*]: He may well blame his own folly when he calls to mind his treatment of my beloved Sakoontalá.

KING: Ah! woe is me! when I forsook my wife—

My lawful wife—concealed within her breast
There lay my second self, a child unborn,
Hope of my race, e'en as the choicest fruit
Lies hidden in the bosom of the earth.

SÁNUMATÍ [*aside*]: There is no fear of your race being cut off for want of a son.

CHATURIKÁ [*aside to Vetravatí*]: The affair of the merchant's death has quite upset our royal master, and caused him sad distress. Had you not better fetch the worthy Máthavya from the Palace of Clouds to comfort him?

VETRAVATÍ: A very good idea. [*Exit.*

KING: Alas! the shades of my forefathers are even now beginning to be alarmed, lest at my death they may be deprived of their funeral libations.

No son remains in King Dushyanta's place
To offer sacred homage to the dead
Of Puru's noble line: my ancestors
Must drink these glistening tears, the last libation
A childless man can ever hope to make them.

[*Falls down in an agony of grief.*

CHATURIKÁ [*looking at him in consternation*]: Great King, compose yourself.

SÁNUMATÍ [*aside*]: Alas! alas! though a bright light is shining near him, he is involved in the blackest darkness, by reason of the veil that obscures his sight. I will now reveal all, and put an end to his misery. But no; I heard the mother of the great Indra, when she was consoling Sakoontalá, say, that the gods will soon bring about a joyful union between husband and wife, being eager for the sacrifice which will be celebrated in their honor on the occasion. I must not anticipate the happy moment, but will return at once to my dear friend and cheer her with an account of what I have seen and heard.

[*Rises aloft and disappears.*

A VOICE [*behind the scenes*]: Help! help! to the rescue!

KING [*recovering himself. Listening*]: Ha! I heard a cry of distress, and in Máthavya's voice. What ho there!

VETRAVATÍ [*entering*]: Your friend is in danger; save him, great King.

KING: Who dares insult the worthy Máthavya?

VETRAVATÍ: Some evil demon, invisible to human eyes, has seized him, and carried him to one of the turrets of the Palace of Clouds.

KING [*rising*]: Impossible! Have evil spirits power over my subjects, even in my private apartments? Well, well—

Daily I seem less able to avert
Misfortune from myself, and o'er my actions
Less competent to exercise control;
How can I then direct my subjects' ways,
Or shelter them from tyranny and wrong?

A VOICE [*behind the scenes*]: Halloo there! my dear friend; help! help!

KING [*advancing with rapid strides*]: Fear nothing——

THE SAME VOICE [*behind the scenes*]: Fear nothing, indeed! How can I help fearing when some monster is twisting back my neck, and is about to snap it as he would a sugar-cane?

KING [*looking around*]: What ho there! my bow.

SLAVE [*entering with a bow*]: Behold your bow, Sire, and your armguard.

[*The King snatches up the bow and arrows.*

ANOTHER VOICE [*behind the scenes*]: Here, thirsting for thy life-blood, will I slay thee,
As a fierce tiger rends his struggling prey.
Call now thy friend Dushyanta to thy aid;
His bow is mighty to defend the weak;
Yet all its vaunted power shall be as nought.

KING [*with fury*]: What! dares he defy me to my face? Hold there, monster! Prepare to die, for your time is come. [*Stringing his bow.*] Vetravatí, lead the way to the terrace.

VETRAVATÍ: This way, Sire. [*They advance in haste.*

KING [*looking on every side*]: How's this? there is nothing to be seen.

A VOICE [*behind the scenes*]: Help! Save me! I can see you, though you cannot see me. I am like a mouse in the claws of a cat; my life is not worth a moment's purchase.

KING: Avaunt, monster! You may pride yourself on the magic that renders you invisible, but my arrow shall find you out. Thus do I fix a shaft
That shall discern between an impious demon
And a good Bráhman; bearing death to thee,
To him deliverance—even as the swan
Distinguishes the milk from worthless water. [*Takes aim.*

Enter Mátali, holding Máthavya, whom he releases.

MÁTALI: Turn thou thy deadly arrows on the demons;
Such is the will of Indra; let thy bow
Be drawn against the enemies of the gods;
But on thy friends cast only looks of favor.

KING [*putting back his arrow*]: What, Mátali! Welcome, most noble charioteer of the mighty Indra.

MÁTHAVYA: So, here is a monster who thought as little about slaughtering me as if I had been a bullock for sacrifice, and you must e'en greet him with a welcome.

MÁTALI [*smiling*]: Great Prince, hear on what errand Indra sent me into your presence.

KING: I am all attention.

MÁTALI: There is a race of giants, the descendants of Kálanemi, whom the gods find difficult to subdue.

KING: So I have already heard from Nárada.

MÁTALI: Heaven's mighty lord, who deigns to call thee "friend,"
Appoints thee to the post of highest honor,
As leader of his armies; and commits
The subjugation of this giant brood
To thy resistless arms, e'en as the sun
Leaves the pale moon to dissipate the darkness.

Let your Majesty, therefore, ascend at once the celestial car of Indra; and, grasping your arms, advance to victory.

KING: The mighty Indra honors me too highly by such a mark of distinction. But tell me, what made you act thus towards my poor friend Máthavya?

MÁTALI: I will tell you. Perceiving that your Majesty's spirit was completely broken by some distress of mind under which you were laboring, I determined to rouse your energies by moving you to anger. Because

To light a flame, we need but stir the embers;
The cobra, when incensed, extends his head
And springs upon his foe; the bravest men
Display their courage only when provoked.

KING [*aside to Máthavya*]: My dear Máthavya, the commands of the great Indra must not be left unfulfilled. Go you and acquaint my minister, Piśuna, with what has happened, and say to him from me,

Dushyanta to thy care confides his realm—
Protect with all the vigor of thy mind
The interests of my people; while my bow
Is braced against the enemies of heaven.

MÁTHAVYA: I obey. [*Exit.*

MÁTALI: Ascend, illustrious Prince.

[*The King ascends the car. Exeunt.*

ACT SEVENTH

Scene—The Sky

Enter King Dushyanta and Mátali in the car of Indra, moving in the air.

KING: My good Mátali, it appears to me incredible that I can merit such a mark of distinction for having simply fulfilled the behests of the great Indra.

MÁTALI [*smiling*]: Great Prince, it seems to me that neither of you is satisfied with himself—

You underrate the service you have rendered,
And think too highly of the god's reward:
He deems it scarce sufficient recompense
For your heroic deeds on his behalf.

KING: Nay, Mátali, say not so. My most ambitious expectations were more than realized by the honor conferred on me at the moment when I took my leave. For,

Tinged with celestial sandal, from the breast
Of the great Indra, where before it hung,
A garland of the ever-blooming tree
Of Nandana was cast about my neck

By his own hand: while, in the very presence
Of the assembled gods, I was enthroned
Beside their mighty lord, who smiled to see
His son Jayanta envious of the honor.

MÁTALI: There is no mark of distinction which your Majesty does not deserve at the hands of the immortals. See,

Heaven's hosts acknowledge thee their second saviour;
For now thy bow's unerring shafts (as erst
The lion-man's terrific claws) have purged
The empyreal sphere from taint of demons foul.

KING: The praise of my victory must be ascribed to the majesty of Indra.

When mighty gods make men their delegates
In martial enterprise, to them belongs
The palm of victory; and not to mortals.
Could the pale Dawn dispel the shades of night,
Did not the god of day, whose diadem
Is jewelled with a thousand beams of light,
Place him in front of his effulgent car?

MÁTALI: A very just comparison. [*Driving on.*] Great King, behold! the glory of thy fame has reached even to the vault of heaven.

Hark! yonder inmates of the starry sphere
Sing anthems worthy of thy martial deeds,
While with celestial colors they depict
The story of thy victories on scrolls
Formed of the leaves of heaven's immortal trees.

KING: My good Mátali, yesterday, when I ascended the sky, I was so eager to do battle with the demons, that the road by which we were travelling towards Indra's heaven escaped my observation. Tell me, in which path of the seven winds are we now moving?

MÁTALI: We journey in the path of Parivaha;
The wind that bears along the triple Ganges,
And causes Ursa's seven stars to roll
In their appointed orbits, scattering
Their several rays with equal distribution.
'Tis the same path that once was sanctified
By the divine impression of the foot
Of Vishnu, when, to conquer haughty Bali,
He spanned the heavens in his second stride.

KING: This is the reason, I suppose, that a sensation of calm repose pervades all my senses. [*Looking down at the wheels.*] Ah! Mátali, we are descending towards the earth's atmosphere.

MÁTALI: What makes you think so?

KING: The car itself instructs me; we are moving
O'er pregnant clouds, surcharged with rain; below us

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I see the moisture-loving Chátakas
In sportive flight dart through the spokes; the steeds
Of Indra glisten with the lightning's flash;
And a thick mist bedews the circling wheels.

MÁTALI: You are right; in a little while the chariot will touch the ground, and you will be in your own dominions.

KING [*looking down*]: How wonderful is the appearance of the earth as we rapidly descend!

Stupendous prospect! yonder lofty hills
Do suddenly uprear their towering heads
Amid the plain, while from beneath their crests
The ground receding sinks; the trees, whose stems
Seemed lately hid within their leafy tresses,
Rise into elevation, and display
Their branching shoulders; yonder streams, whose waters,
Like silver threads, but now were scarcely seen,
Grow into mighty rivers; lo! the earth
Seems upward hurled by some gigantic power.

MÁTALI: Well described! [*Looking with awe.*] Grand, indeed, and lovely is the spectacle presented by the earth.

KING: Tell me, Mátali, what is that range of mountains which, like a bank of clouds illumined by the setting sun, pours down a stream of gold? On one side its base dips into the eastern ocean, and on the other side into the western.

MÁTALI: Great Prince, it is called "Golden-peak,"[11] and is the abode of the attendants of the god of Wealth. In this spot the highest forms of penance are wrought out.

There Kaśyapa, the great progenitor
Of demons and of gods, himself the offspring
Of the divine Maríchi, Brahmá's son,
With Aditi, his wife, in calm seclusion,
Does holy penance for the good of mortals.

KING: Then I must not neglect so good an opportunity of obtaining his blessing. I should much like to visit this venerable personage and offer him my homage.

MÁTALI: By all means! An excellent idea.

[*Guides the car to the earth.*

KING [*in a tone of wonder*]: How's this?

Our chariot wheels move noiselessly. Around
No clouds of dust arise; no shock betokened
Our contact with the earth; we seem to glide
Above the ground, so lightly do we touch it.

MÁTALI: Such is the difference between the car of Indra and that of your Majesty.

KING: In which direction, Mátali, is Kaśyapa's sacred retreat?

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[11] A sacred range of mountains lying along the Himálaya chain immediately adjacent to Kailása, the paradise of Kuvera, the god of wealth.

MÁTALI [*pointing*]: Where stands yon anchorite, towards the orb
Of the meridian sun, immovable
As a tree's stem, his body half-concealed
By a huge ant-hill. Round about his breast
No sacred cord is twined, but in its stead
A hideous serpent's skin. In place of necklace,
The tendrils of a withered creeper chafe
His wasted neck. His matted hair depends
In thick entanglement about his shoulders,
And birds construct their nests within its folds.

KING: I salute thee, thou man of austere devotion.

MÁTALI [*holding in the reins of the car*]: Great Prince, we are now in the sacred grove of the holy Kaśyapa—the grove that boasts as its ornament one of the five trees of Indra's heaven, reared by Aditi.

KING: This sacred retreat is more delightful than heaven itself. I could almost fancy myself bathing in a pool of nectar.

MÁTALI [*stopping the chariot*]: Descend, mighty Prince.

KING [*descending*]: And what will you do, Mátali?

MÁTALI: The chariot will remain where I have stopped it. We may both descend. [*Doing so.*] This way, great King. [*Walking on.*] You see around you the celebrated region where the holiest sages devote themselves to penitential rites.

KING: I am filled with awe and wonder as I gaze.
In such a place as this do saints of earth
Long to complete their acts of penance; here,
Beneath the shade of everlasting trees,
Transplanted from the groves of Paradise,
May they inhale the balmy air, and need
No other nourishment; here may they bathe
In fountains sparkling with the golden dust
Of lilies, here, on jewelled slabs of marble,
In meditation rapt, may they recline;
Here, in the presence of celestial nymphs,
E'en passion's voice is powerless to move them.

MÁTALI: So true is it that the aspirations of the good and great are ever soaring upwards. [*Turning round and speaking off the stage.*] Tell me, Vriddha-śákalya, how is the divine son of Maríchi now engaged? What sayest thou? that he is conversing with Aditi and some of the wives of the great sages, and that they are questioning him respecting the duties of a faithful wife?

KING [*listening*]: Then we must await the holy father's leisure.

MÁTALI [*looking at the King*]: If your Majesty will rest under the shade, at the foot of this Aśoka-tree, I will seek an opportunity of announcing your arrival to Indra's reputed father.

KING: As you think proper. [*Remains under the tree.*

MÁTALI: Great King, I go. [*Exit.*

KING [*feeling his arm throb*]: Wherefore this causeless throbbing, O mine arm?

All hope has fled forever; mock me not
With presages of good, when happiness
Is lost, and nought but misery remains.

A VOICE [*behind the scenes*]: Be not so naughty. Do you begin already to show a refractory spirit?

KING [*listening*]: This is no place for petulance. Who can it be whose behavior calls for such a rebuke? [*Looking in the direction of the sound and smiling.*] A child, is it? closely attended by two holy women. His disposition seems anything but childlike. See,

He braves the fury of yon lioness
Suckling its savage offspring, and compels
The angry whelp to leave the half-sucked dug,
Tearing its tender mane in boisterous sport.

Enter a child, attended by two women of the hermitage, in the manner described.

CHILD: Open your mouth, my young lion, I want to count your teeth.

FIRST ATTENDANT: You naughty child, why do you tease the animals? Know you not that we cherish them in this hermitage as if they were our own children? In good sooth, you have a high spirit of your own, and are beginning already to do justice to the name Sarvadamana (All-taming), given you by the hermits.

KING: Strange! My heart inclines towards the boy with almost as much affection as if he were my own child. What can be the reason? I suppose my own childlessness makes me yearn towards the sons of others.

SECOND ATTENDANT: This lioness will certainly attack you if you do not release her whelp.

CHILD [*laughing*]: Oh! indeed! let her come. Much I fear her, to be sure. [*Pouts his under-lip in defiance.*

KING: The germ of mighty courage lies concealed
Within this noble infant, like a spark
Beneath the fuel, waiting but a breath
To fan the flame and raise a conflagration.

FIRST ATTENDANT: Let the young lion go, like a dear child, and I will give you something else to play with.

CHILD: Where is it? Give it me first. [*Stretches out his hand.*

KING [*looking at his hand*]: How's this? His hand exhibits one of those mystic marks which are the sure prognostic of universal empire. See!

His fingers stretched in eager expectation
To grasp the wished-for toy, and knit together
By a close-woven web, in shape resemble
A lotus-blossom, whose expanding petals
The early dawn has only half unfolded.

SECOND ATTENDANT: We shall never pacify him by mere words, dear Suvratá. Be kind enough to go to my cottage, and you will find there a plaything belonging to Márkándeya, one of the hermit's children. It is a peacock made of China-ware, painted in many colors. Bring it here for the child.

FIRST ATTENDANT: Very well. [*Exit.*

CHILD: No, no; I shall go on playing with the young lion. [*Looks at the female attendant and laughs.*

KING: I feel an unaccountable affection for this wayward child.

How blessed the virtuous parents whose attire
Is soiled with dust, by raising from the ground
The child that asks a refuge in their arms!
And happy are they while with lisping prattle,
In accents sweetly inarticulate,
He charms their ears; and with his artless smiles
Gladdens their hearts, revealing to their gaze
His tiny teeth, just budding into view.

ATTENDANT: I see how it is. He pays me no manner of attention. [*Looking off the stage.*] I wonder whether any of the hermits are about here. [*Seeing the King.*] Kind Sir, could you come hither a moment and help me to release the young lion from the clutch of this child, who is teasing him in boyish play?

KING [*approaching and smiling*]: Listen to me, thou child of a mighty saint.

Dost thou dare show a wayward spirit here?
Here, in this hallowed region? Take thou heed
Lest, as the serpent's young defiles the sandal,
Thou bring dishonor on the holy sage,
Thy tender-hearted parent, who delights
To shield from harm the tenants of the wood.

ATTENDANT: Gentle Sir, I thank you; but he is not the saint's son.

KING: His behavior and whole bearing would have led me to doubt it, had not the place of his abode encouraged the idea.

[*Follows the child, and takes him by the hand, according to the request of the attendant. Speaking aside.*

I marvel that the touch of this strange child

Should thrill me with delight; if so it be,
How must the fond caresses of a son
Transport the father's soul who gave him being!

ATTENDANT [*looking at them both*]: Wonderful! Prodigious!

KING: What excites your surprise, my good woman?

ATTENDANT: I am astonished at the striking resemblance between the child and yourself; and, what is still more extraordinary, he seems to have taken to you kindly and submissively, though you are a stranger to him.

KING [*fondling the child*]: If he be not the son of the great sage, of what family does he come, may I ask?

ATTENDANT: Of the race of Puru.

KING [*aside*]: What! are we, then, descended from the same ancestry? This, no doubt, accounts for the resemblance she traces between the child and me. Certainly it has always been an established usage among the princes of Puru's race,

To dedicate the morning of their days
To the world's weal, in palaces and halls,
'Mid luxury and regal pomp abiding;
Then, in the wane of life, to seek release
From kingly cares, and make the hallowed shade
Of sacred trees their last asylum, where
As hermits they may practice self-abasement,
And bind themselves by rigid vows of penance.

[*Aloud.*] But how could mortals by their own power gain admission to this sacred region?

ATTENDANT: Your remark is just; but your wonder will cease when I tell you that his mother is the offspring of a celestial nymph, and gave him birth in the hallowed grove of Kaśyapa.

KING [*aside*]: Strange that my hopes should be again excited! [*Aloud.*] But what, let me ask, was the name of the prince whom she deigned to honor with her hand?

ATTENDANT: How could I think of polluting my lips by the mention of a wretch who had the cruelty to desert his lawful wife?

KING [*aside*]: Ha! the description suits me exactly. Would I could bring myself to inquire the name of the child's mother! [*Reflecting.*] But it is against propriety to make too minute inquiries about the wife of another man.

FIRST ATTENDANT [*entering with the china peacock in her hand*]: Sarva-damana, Sarva-damana, see, see, what a beautiful Sakoonta (bird).

CHILD [*looking round*]: My mother! Where? Let me go to her.

BOTH ATTENDANTS: He mistook the word Sakoonta for

Sakoontalá. The boy dotes upon his mother, and she is ever uppermost in his thoughts.

SECOND ATTENDANT: Nay, my dear child, I said, Look at the beauty of this Sakoonta.

KING [*aside*]: What! is his mother's name Sakoontalá? But the name is not uncommon among women. Alas! I fear the mere similarity of a name, like the deceitful vapor of the desert, has once more raised my hopes only to dash them to the ground.

CHILD [*takes the toy*]: Dear nurse, what a beautiful peacock!

FIRST ATTENDANT [*looking at the child. In great distress*]: Alas! alas! I do not see the amulet on his wrist.

KING: Don't distress yourself. Here it is. It fell off while he was struggling with the young lion. [*Stoops to pick it up.*

BOTH ATTENDANTS: Hold! hold! Touch it not, for your life. How marvellous! He has actually taken it up without the slightest hesitation.

[*Both raise their hands to their breasts and look at each other in astonishment.*

KING: Why did you try to prevent my touching it?

FIRST ATTENDANT: Listen, great Monarch. This amulet, known as "The Invincible," was given to the boy by the divine son of Maríchi, soon after his birth, when the natal ceremony was performed. Its peculiar virtue is, that when it falls on the ground, no one excepting the father or mother of the child can touch it unhurt.

KING: And suppose another person touches it?

FIRST ATTENDANT: Then it instantly becomes a serpent, and bites him.

KING: Have you ever witnessed the transformation with your own eyes?

BOTH ATTENDANTS: Over and over again.

KING [*with rapture. Aside*]: Joy! joy! Are then my dearest hopes to be fulfilled? [*Embraces the child.*

SECOND ATTENDANT: Come, my dear Suvratá, we must inform Sakoontalá immediately of this wonderful event, though we have to interrupt her in the performance of her religious vows. [*Exeunt.*

CHILD [*to the King*]: Do not hold me. I want to go to my mother.

KING: We will go to her together, and give her joy, my son.

CHILD: Dushyanta is my father, not you.

KING [*smiling*]: His contradiction convinces me only the more.

Enter Sakoontalá, in widow's apparel, with her long hair twisted into a single braid.

SAKOONTALÁ [*aside*]: I have just heard that Sarva-damana's amulet has retained its form, though a stranger raised it from the ground. I can hardly believe in my good fortune. Yet why should not Sánumatí's prediction be verified?

KING [*gazing at Śakoontalá*]: Alas! can this indeed be my Śakoontalá?

Clad in the weeds of widowhood, her face
Emaciate with fasting, her long hair
Twined in a single braid, her whole demeanor
Expressive of her purity of soul:
With patient constancy she thus prolongs
The vow to which my cruelty condemned her.

ŚAKOONTALÁ [*gazing at the King, who is pale with remorse*]: Surely this is not like my husband; yet who can it be that dares pollute by the pressure of his hand my child, whose amulet should protect him from a stranger's touch?

CHILD [*going to his mother*]: Mother, who is this man that has been kissing me and calling me his son?

KING: My best beloved, I have indeed treated thee most cruelly, but am now once more thy fond and affectionate lover. Refuse not to acknowledge me as thy husband.

ŚAKOONTALÁ [*aside*]: Be of good cheer, my heart. The anger of Destiny is at last appeased. Heaven regards thee with compassion. But is he in very truth my husband?

KING: Behold me, best and loveliest of women,
Delivered from the cloud of fatal darkness
That erst oppressed my memory. Again
Behold us brought together by the grace
Of the great lord of Heaven. So the moon
Shines forth from dim eclipse, to blend his rays
With the soft lustre of his Rohiní.

ŚAKOONTALÁ: May my husband be victorious——[*She stops short, her voice choked with tears.*

KING: O fair one, though the utterance of thy prayer
Be lost amid the torrent of thy tears,
Yet does the sight of thy fair countenance,
And of thy pallid lips, all unadorned
And colorless in sorrow for my absence,
Make me already more than conqueror.

CHILD: Mother, who is this man?

ŚAKOONTALÁ: My child, ask the deity that presides over thy destiny.

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KING [*falling at Sakoontalá's feet*]: Fairest of women, banish from thy mind
The memory of my cruelty; reproach
The fell delusion that o'erpowered my soul,
And blame not me, thy husband; 'tis the curse
Of him in whom the power of darkness reigns,
That he mistakes the gifts of those he loves

For deadly evils. Even though a friend
Should wreathe a garland on a blind man's brow,
Will he not cast it from him as a serpent?

ŚAKOONTALÁ: Rise, my own husband, rise. Thou wast not to blame. My own evil deeds, committed in a former state of being, brought down this judgment upon me. How else could my husband, who was ever of a compassionate disposition, have acted so unfeelingly? [*The King rises.*] But tell me, my husband, how did the remembrance of thine unfortunate wife return to thy mind?

KING: As soon as my heart's anguish is removed, and its wounds are healed, I will tell thee all.

Oh! let me, fair one, chase away the drop
That still bedews the fringes of thine eye;
And let me thus efface the memory
Of every tear that stained thy velvet cheek,
Unnoticed and unheeded by thy lord,
When in his madness he rejected thee. [*Wipes away the tear.*

ŚAKOONTALÁ [*seeing the signet-ring on his finger*]: Ah! my dear husband, is that the Lost Ring?

KING: Yes; the moment I recovered it, my memory was restored.

ŚAKOONTALÁ: The ring was to blame in allowing itself to be lost at the very time when I was anxious to convince my noble husband of the reality of my marriage.

KING: Receive it back, as the beautiful twining plant receives again its blossom in token of its reunion with the spring.

ŚAKOONTALÁ: Nay; I can never more place confidence in it. Let my husband retain it.

Enter Mátali.

MÁTALI: I congratulate your Majesty. Happy are you in your reunion with your wife: happy are you in beholding the face of your son.

KING: Yes, indeed. My heart's dearest wish has borne sweet fruit. But tell me, Mátali, is this joyful event known to the great Indra?

MÁTALI [*smiling*]: What is unknown to the gods? But come with me, noble Prince, the divine Kaśyapa graciously permits thee to be presented to him.

KING: Śakoontalá, take our child and lead the way. We will together go into the presence of the holy Sage.

ŚAKOONTALÁ: I shrink from entering the august presence of the great Saint, even with my husband at my side.

KING: Nay; on such a joyous occasion it is highly proper. Come, come; I entreat thee. [*All advance.*

Kaśyapa is discovered seated on a throne with his wife Aditi.

KAŚYAPA [*gazing at Dushyanta. To his wife*]: O Aditi,
This is the mighty hero, King Dushyanta,
Protector of the earth; who, at the head
Of the celestial armies of thy son,
Does battle with the enemies of heaven.
Thanks to his bow, the thunderbolt of Indra
Rests from its work, no more the minister
Of death and desolation to the world,
But a mere symbol of divinity.

ADITI: He bears in his noble form all the marks of dignity.

MÁTALI [*to Dushyanta*]: Sire, the venerable progenitors of the celestials are gazing at your Majesty with as much affection as if you were their son. You may advance towards them.

KING: Are these, O Mátali, the holy pair,
Offspring of Daksha and divine Maríchi,
Children of Brahmá's sons, by sages deemed
Sole fountain of celestial light, diffused
Through twelve effulgent orbs? Are these the pair
From whom the ruler of the triple world,
Sovereign of gods and lord of sacrifice,
Sprang into being? That immortal pair
Whom Vishnu, greater than the self-existent,
Chose for his parents, when, to save mankind,
He took upon himself the shape of mortals?

MÁTALI: Even so.

KING [*prostrating himself*]: Most august of beings, Dushyanta, content to have fulfilled the commands of your son Indra, offers you his adoration.

KAŚYAPA: My son, long may'st thou live, and happily may'st thou reign over the earth!

ADITI: My son, may'st thou ever be invincible in the field of battle!

ŚAKOONTALÁ: I also prostrate myself before you, most adorable beings, and my child with me.

KAŚYAPA: My daughter,
Thy lord resembles Indra, and thy child
Is noble as Jayanta, Indra's son;
I have no worthier blessing left for thee,
May'st thou be faithful as the god's own wife!

ADITI: My daughter, may'st thou be always the object of thy husband's fondest love; and may thy son live long to be the joy of both his parents! Be seated.

[*All sit down in the presence of Kaśyapa.*

KAŚYAPA [*regarding each of them by turns*]: Hail to the beautiful Śakoontalá!
Hail to her noble son! and hail to thee,

Illustrious Prince! Rare triple combination
Of virtue, wealth, and energy united!

KING: Most venerable Kaśyapa, by your favor all my desires were accomplished even before I was admitted to your presence. Never was mortal so honored that his boon should be granted ere it was solicited. Because,

Bloom before fruit, the clouds before the rain—
Cause first and then effect, in endless sequence,
Is the unchanging law of constant nature:
But, ere the blessing issued from thy lips,
The wishes of my heart were all fulfilled.

MÁTALI: It is thus that the great progenitors of the world confer favors.

KING: Most reverend Sage, this thy handmaid was married to me by the Gandharva ceremony, and after a time was conducted to my palace by her relations. Meanwhile a fatal delusion seized me; I lost my memory and rejected her, thus committing a grievous offense against the venerable Kanwa, who is of thy divine race. Afterwards the sight of this ring restored my faculties, and brought back to my mind all the circumstances of my union with his daughter. But my conduct still seems to me incomprehensible;

As foolish as the fancies of a man
Who, when he sees an elephant, denies
That 'tis an elephant, yet afterwards,
When its huge bulk moves onward, hesitates,
Yet will not be convinced till it has passed
Forever from his sight, and left behind
No vestige of its presence save its footsteps.

KAŚYAPA: My son, cease to think thyself in fault. Even the delusion that possessed thy mind was not brought about by any act of thine. Listen to me.

KING: I am attentive.

KAŚYAPA: Know that when the nymph Menaká, the mother of Śakoontalá, became aware of her daughter's anguish in consequence of the loss of the ring at the nymphs' pool, and of thy subsequent rejection of her, she brought her and confided her to the care of Aditi. And I no sooner saw her than I ascertained by my divine power of meditation, that thy repudiation of thy poor faithful wife had been caused entirely by the curse of Durvásas—not by thine own fault—and that the spell would terminate on the discovery of the ring.

KING [*drawing a deep breath*]: Oh! what a weight is taken off my mind, now that my character is cleared of reproach.

ŚAKOONTALÁ [*aside*]: Joy! joy! My revered husband did not, then, reject me without good reason, though I have no recollection of the curse pronounced upon me. But, in all probability, I unconsciously brought it upon myself, when I was so distracted on being separated from my husband soon after our marriage. For I now remember that my two friends advised me not to fail to show the ring in case he should have forgotten me.

KAŚYAPA: At last, my daughter, thou art happy, and hast gained thy heart's desire. Indulge, then, no feeling of resentment against thy partner. See, now,

Though he repulsed thee, 'twas the sage's curse
That clouded his remembrance; 'twas the curse
That made thy tender husband harsh towards thee.
Soon as the spell was broken, and his soul
Delivered from its darkness, in a moment
Thou didst gain thine empire o'er his heart.
So on the tarnished surface of a mirror
No image is reflected, till the dust
That dimmed its wonted lustre is removed.

KING: Holy father, see here the hope of my royal race.
[*Takes his child by the hand.*

KAŚYAPA: Know that he, too, will become the monarch of the whole earth. Observe,

Soon, a resistless hero, shall he cross
The trackless ocean, borne above the waves
In an aerial car; and shall subdue
The earth's seven sea-girt isles.[12] Now has he gained,
As the brave tamer of the forest-beasts,
The title Sarva-damana; but then
Mankind shall hail him as King Bharata,
And call him the supporter of the world.

KING: We cannot but entertain the highest hopes of a child for whom your highness performed the natal rites.

ADITI: My revered husband, should not the intelligence be conveyed to Kanwa, that his daughter's wishes are fulfilled, and her happiness complete? He is Śakoontalá's foster-father. Menaká, who is one of my attendants, is her mother, and dearly does she love her daughter.

ŚAKOONTALÁ [*aside*]: The venerable matron has given utterance to the very wish that was in my mind.

KAŚYAPA: His penances have gained for him the faculty of omniscience, and the whole scene is already present to his mind's eye.

KING: Then most assuredly he cannot be very angry with me.

KAŚYAPA: Nevertheless it becomes us to send him intelligence of this happy event, and hear his reply. What, ho there!

PUPIL [*entering*]: Holy father, what are your commands?

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[12] According to the mythical geography of the Hindoos the earth consisted of seven islands surrounded by seven seas.

KAŚYAPA: My good Gálava, delay not an instant, but hasten through the air and convey to the venerable Kanwa, from me, the happy news that the fatal spell has ceased, that Dushyanta's memory is restored, that his daughter Sakoontalá has a son, and that she is once more tenderly acknowledged by her husband.

PUPIL: Your highness's commands shall be obeyed. [*Exit.*

KAŚYAPA: And now, my dear son, take thy consort and thy child, re-ascend the car of Indra, and return to thy imperial capital.

KING: Most holy father, I obey.

KAŚYAPA: And accept this blessing—

For countless ages may the god of gods,
Lord of the atmosphere, by copious showers
Secure abundant harvest to thy subjects;
And thou by frequent offerings preserve
The Thunderer's friendship! Thus, by interchange
Of kindly actions, may you both confer
Unnumbered benefits on earth and heaven!

KING: Holy father, I will strive, as far as I am able, to attain this happiness.

KAŚYAPA: What other favor can I bestow on thee, my son?

KING: What other can I desire? If, however, you permit me to form another wish, I would humbly beg that the saying of the sage Bharata be fulfilled:—

May kings reign only for their subjects' weal!
May the divine Saraswati, the source
Of speech, and goddess of dramatic art,
Be ever honored by the great and wise!
And may the purple self-existent god,
Whose vital Energy pervades all space,
From future transmigrations save my soul! [*Exeunt omnes.*

son becomes King Hahata ([illegible] bharata)

Atsumori, a Nō Drama, by Seami Motokiyo

[A.D. 1363-1444]

TRANSLATED BY ARTHUR WALEY [1889-]

The fascination which the Japanese Nō drama has had for such outstanding 20th century poets as William Butler Yeats and Ezra Pound is no doubt attributable to its highly stylized and self-conscious form. If to the untutored reader or observer the Nō seems primitive, he must remember that primitivism is often the hallmark of sophistication.

The Nō grew out of popular Shinto dances and mimes in the 12th through the 14th centuries, but under Buddhist influence it

from GODS, DEMONS, and OTHERS
retold by R.K. Narayan
New Delhi: Vision Books, 1987

Savitri

ASVAPATI was the ruler of Mudra, an ideal king devoted to the happiness and welfare of his subjects and all living creatures on earth. But as with all such good men, he was childless. He devoted all his hours to praying for issue, offered rare sacrifices, and practised all kinds of austerities for eighteen years single-mindedly. The goddess Savitri, whose hymn he recited a hundred thousand times as a part of his prayer, appeared before him and conferred on him the boon of a daughter (although he prayed for a son), and in honour of the goddess she was named Savitri. She was a darling child in every way.

When she reached the age of marriage, her father had high

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hopes of her being courted by eligible young men, but none came forward, in spite of her beauty and accomplishments. It was not difficult to find out why. The king sent his secret-service messengers abroad to sound out the eligible princes in the neighbouring states as to why they were not-coming forward to ask for Savitri's hand. The messengers came back in due course to report, "They are afraid to ask for her hand. They think that she is a goddess incarnate and cannot be asked to be a wife."

The king felt both flattered and pained. By a strange twist of circumstances the very perfections of the maiden were acting as a handicap. He asked, "Would it not have been useful to tell them that she is really human? Very well. We will remedy it."

He sent for his daughter, who was playing the *veena* in her own chambers. He told her, "My daughter, you will now go out into the world and find yourself a husband, my only condition being that he must seem as good to you as you are to me."

"How can I ever measure myself or others, Father?"

"When the time comes you will understand," he said. He selected one of his trusted ministers and a band of courtiers to escort her during her quest. He warned them, "You will go where she goes, and you will in no way attempt to influence her mind."

She went far and wide and returned one day when the king was sitting in his court, conversing with the sage Narada, who had stopped by on one of his interstellar journeyings. When she came in, Narada asked, "Where has she been? How is it that you have not thought of finding her a husband?"

The king explained, "She has just returned from her quest. Let us hear what her luck has been."

The daughter, at her father's invitation, came forward and said, "I have found my . . ." She hesitated for half a minute before uttering the word "husband," but then she overcame her shyness and said, "I have found the man who will be my husband—not in a palace but in a hermitage hidden away in the forests from prying eyes. It was my good fortune that led my steps there. His name is Satyavan. There he is tending his aged father, who is blind."

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At this stage the all-knowing sage Narada interposed, "He is the son of the king of Salwa. Through ill luck this king lost his eyesight when his son was born. An old enemy who had been waiting to attack him most cruelly chose this moment, and the king had to flee into the forest, carrying his child. I know all about it. Savitri, am I right?" Savitri felt happy when the sage added, "Your daughter has chosen a worthy husband. Satyavan is brilliant, strong, mighty, graceful, and generous, and is handsome like the twin Aswinis. But . . . Permit me to speak frankly, my child, because I see the future as I see the present and the past. His earthly existence will last for only a year more, until exactly one year from today. . . . My child, go out again and choose another person for a husband."

Tears came to Savitri's eyes. Her father trembled with apprehension. Savitri drew herself up resolutely before uttering these words: "O great sage, forgive my disobedience. I will not think of anyone else as my husband; it matters little to me how long or how short is Satyavan's life. My mind is made up. To adore someone or marry someone is an action like birth and death. It can happen only once in a lifetime and cannot be repeated or corrected at will. Satyavan alone will be my husband."

Narada was pleased. "It is spirit like hers that conquers death," he said. "King, help her to join her husband. It is your duty. Love like hers mocks at death."

After Narada left, Asvapati started out in search of the forest where the blind king lived, introduced himself, and offered his daughter to his son. The blind king said, "Life in a hermitage is strange, lonely, and hard, and unsuited to a delicate creature like Savitri."

The king cut short his talk with "Say no more. There is no alternative. She will marry Satyavan and none else."

"And Satyavan will marry her and no one else, I have known it ever since she came here. So be it. Heavens bless their union."

It turned out to be a happy marriage. Satyavan found Savitri attentive and courteous to his aged parents also, at all times observing the courtesy of restrained speech, cheerfulness, helpfulness, and all other codes of good manners prescribed for an ideal daughter-in-law. Savitri performed these tasks not as a mere duty but with all her being, because she experienced supreme joy as both wife and daughter-in-law.

However, through all the happy hours in the forest hermitage, Savitri was secretly gnawed by the thought that each moment was taking Satyavan nearer his last one. When just four days were left of Satyavan's tenure on earth, Savitri undertook a severe penance and continuously fasted for three days and nights. Her father-in-law, puzzled by the severity of her prayers, said, "Savitri, you are a princess, how can you undertake such severe penances? Let me not presume to advise you to give up your plan, let me content myself by saying, 'May your vow, whatever its nature, be fulfilled!' "

She was fatigued by the fast, but she looked unperturbed, unmoved, and firm, like a block of wood.

On the fourth day, the fateful day, she counted the hours. She performed the climax of her observance by offering oblations to the fire, prostrated herself before an assembly of elders, and took their blessings in reverent silence. Then her parents-in-law advised, "You have completed your penance now, please eat your food."

"Yes, after the sun sets," Savitri replied and noticed her husband Satyavan leaving for the forests, bearing an axe on his shoulder. She rushed up, crying, "I am coming with you."

Satyavan said, "Why? Rest here and nourish yourself; you have put yourself through a lot of hardship the last four days. I am going deep into the forest, and the paths are rough; you can't walk so far."

Savitri said, "I am not tired after the fast. I must go with you."

"Very well," said Satyavan. "Please explain it to my parents so that they may not think that I am forcing you to go with me."

She approached her parents-in-law and said, "I wish to go into the forest with my husband. I want to watch him gather fruits and firewood. I have been here almost a year and have not seen the forest in bloom."

Her father-in-law said, "Savitri has never made any request. Let her enjoy herself."

Savitri walked through the forest, clasping her husband's hand as he explained the finer points of forest life to her. All through those hours, while watching beautiful scenes or enjoying beautiful moments, Savitri was racked with the thought that the hour of doom was approaching. She helped Satyavan gather fruits, and then he went off to cut wood. Resting, she watched him without batting an eyelid as he wielded his axe and the forest resounded with steel hitting wood.

Suddenly he dropped the axe and came to her, muttering, "I am not feeling well. My head throbs; perhaps I have exerted myself too much." She sprang to her feet, took him in her arms, and gently helped him lie down on the grass, resting his head on her lap. Gradually he seemed to fall asleep.

Hardly had he ceased to stir when she sensed a strange presence hovering about close by. She concentrated all her powers of observation and espied the formidable figure of a man with red eyes, blood-red robes, holding a noose in his hand. He stood over Satyavan and stared at his recumbent figure. On seeing him, Savitri gently laid down Satyavan's head, rose to her feet, and, saluting this presence, said, "You are not an ordinary being. You must be divine. Tell me who you are and why you are here."

"You are a rare person, Savitri. Your austerities have made you extraordinarily sensitive. I would normally not converse with any being, but I will talk to you. Good woman, I am Death. My name is Yama, as you well know. I am here because your husband's earthly time is over. It is my duty now to extract his subtle life with this noose and carry it away, leaving his gross self there on the ground for you to burn."

Savitri asked, "How is it, my lord, that you have come yourself, when ordinarily you would only send your messengers to perform this task?"

"Because Satyavan is not an ordinary mortal; he is a distinguished one. I wanted to have the honour of calling him away in person."

He extracted from Satyavan his subtle personality by means of his noose and moved off south, for in the south lies Yama's kingdom.

Savitri saw the inert body lose its gloss gradually; she laid it away in a safe place and started after Yama. Yama noticed her determination, and stopped to say, "Don't follow me into my realm. Perform the obsequies for your husband's welfare in the other world and dispose of his physical body in the proper manner."

"I cannot go where my husband is not. No other path is open to me," Savitri said, persistently following him. "We have been taught that a good married life, with discipline and self-control, is the highest form of existence. I have no other life, nor any intention of following a life of renunciation or asceticism. Married life is the highest goal attainable by me, as taught to me by my elders; and so I have nowhere to go except where my husband goes."

"You cannot follow your husband any further, but I am pleased with your outlook; ask for a boon and I shall grant it. Ask for anything except the life of this person."

Savitri promptly asked, "Please restore the sight to my father-in-law."

"It is granted. Tomorrow when he wakes up, he will see the light. Now turn back and go before you get very tired."

"I cannot feel any tiredness where my husband is," she said. "In good company one attains salvation, and therefore should one always stay where good people are found."

Yama was pleased with this sentiment also and said, "Ask for a second boon, my dear girl, anything except the life of Satyavan."

"Please restore to my father-in-law his kingdom, which he lost years ago."

"I gladly grant it. Now go back before you feel fatigued."

"I have often speculated on what is a good life. To my way of thinking it seems to consist in the eradication of malice in thought, word, and deed, and in positive, active benevolence and in giving without acquisitiveness. Correct me, O Yama, if I am wrong. I want to learn the verities from you. Good men make no distinction between friends and enemies while exercising mercy or kindness."

Yama was again pleased with her words and said, "Your words and sentiments have again moved me. Ask for another boon, excepting the life of this husband of yours."

Savitri said, "It has long been a secret sorrow for my father that no son was born to him. Please grant him the birth of a hundred sons."

"He shall have a hundred sons," said Yama. "Now, go back, you have come a long way."

Ignoring the advice, Savitri still followed him, explaining, "While I follow my husband there can be no such thing as distance or fatigue. All right, if you insist, I will stay behind, but will raise my voice so that you may hear my words as you go. You are the son of the sun god, and the wise call you appropriately Vaivaswat. The subjects of your kingdom enjoy absolute, unblemished justice, and that is the reason why you are called king of dharma.* In the company of good people one enjoys a sense of confidence and security, which is not experienced even in one's own company. Therefore, anyone, naturally, prefers to remain in the company of the good."

Yama was visibly moved by this speech of hers. "I am one dreaded, and no one speaks such words as you have just spoken. I am moved by your words. You may ask for a fourth boon, excepting the life of this man."

"Then grant that a hundred sons be born to me."

"Gently lady, you will have a hundred sons, valiant and strong, to make you happy. Now you must turn back, you have come too far."

"The company of good people is never fruitless," began Savitri and expounded the worth of the company of the good, and went on to explain rather intricately how the sun in its orbit moved and the earth sustained life as a direct result of the goodness of the good people.

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* Dharma may be defined broadly as the ultimate code in thought, word, and deed for each individual—that which alone is right for him. The word also carries the meaning of duty, as well as the code, at all levels. Evil arises when one deviates from the path of dharma. All stories and parables taken together illustrate the eternal importance of dharma. Although it varies from one individual to the next, according to birth and mental equipment, there is a dharma for everyone, whether he be a king or a Chandala, and he must live according to it.

Yama was again impressed with this philosophy. "When you speak, my steps lag in order that I may listen to you and get the full import of your words; I revere you, O lady, for your understanding of righteousness. Ask of me a unique boon, O chaste one."

"My chastity is unassailable. If your granting of the boon of a hundred sons is to be fulfilled, you have to give me back my husband. You cannot take away my husband and yet leave me with the boon of a hundred sons."

"Yes, I recognize that," said Yama and loosened the noose that held the life of Satyavan in his hands. He blessed Savitri and her husband with longevity and went forward alone, for the first time in his career yielding back a life.

Savitri hastened back to the spot where Satyavan's body had been laid. She lifted him gently onto her lap and revived him. He opened his eyes, murmuring, "I have slept too long. How patient you have been! Why did you not wake me? I felt someone else was nearby, or was it a dream? I was going somewhere. . . . Tell me, have I been here all along?"

Savitri said, "The night is far advanced. It is dark and your parents will be anxious. Let us go back to the hermitage, if you are able to walk."

"Oh, I feel quite refreshed. Let us go back."

At the hermitage a crowd had gathered because the old king was worrying about his son and daughter-in-law, who had not returned home. They crowded around the couple as they entered the precincts of the hermitage and demanded, "Where were you, out so late?"

Savitri replied, "We were on a far-off expedition and are happy to be back."

The Bhagavad-Gita
Sources of Indian Tradition. Ainslie T. Embree, ed. New York: Columbia University Press, 1988.

From the Bhagavad-Gita on "The Necessity of Action" 2.11-37

Background: The armies of two related families who are rivals for the throne are arrayed on the battlefield. The hero of one of these armies, Arjuna, realizes that, if he fights, he will have to kill friends and kinsmen in the battle to come. Feeling that it is sinful to kill his kin for the sake of a mere throne, he lays down his bow, "not as a coward, but as a morally conscientious and sensitive person..." His friend and charioteer, Krishna, attempts "to convince Arjuna that he would be committing a sin if he failed to perform his own duty (dharma) as a warrior. As for his concern over taking the olives of others, this arose from a delusion that Krishna proceeded to dispel in the following passage:

The Blessed Lord (Krishna) said:
You grieve for those who should not be mourned, and yet you speak words of wisdom! The learned do not grieve for the dead or for the living.
Never, indeed, was there a time when I was not, nor when you were not, nor these lords of men. Never, too, will there be a time when we shall not be.
As in this body, there are for the embodied one childhood, youth, and old age, even so there is the taking on of another body. The wise sage is not perplexed thereby.
Contacts of the sense-organs give rise to cold and heat, and pleasure and pain. They come and go and are not permanent.
That man, whom these sense-organs do not trouble, to whom pleasure and pain are alike, who is wise -- he becomes eligible for immortality.
For the nonexistent there is not coming into existence; nor is there passing into nonexistence for the existent. The ultimate nature of these two is perceived by seers of truth.
He who regards him(self, or his soul) as a slayer, and he who regards him(self or his soul) to be slain -- both of them do not know the truth; for (the soul) neither slays not is slain.
Whoever knows (the soul) to be indestructible and eternal, unborn and (unchanging) -- how and whom can such (a soul) cause to be slain or slay?
Just as a man, having cast off old garments, puts on other, new ones, even so does the embodied (soul), having cast off old bodies, take on other new ones.
Weapons do not cleave him, fire does not burn him; nor does water drench him, nor the wind dry him up...He is eternal, all-pervading, stable, immovable, existing from time immemorial...Therefore, knowing him as such, you should not grieve.
And even if you regard him as being perpetually born and as perpetually dying, even then, you should not grieve for him.

For, to one who is born death is certain and certain is birth to one who has died. Therefore in connection with a thing that is inevitable you should not grieve.

The embodied one within the body of everyone is ever unslayable. Therefore, you should not grieve for any being.

Further, having regard to your own *dharma*, you should not (hesitate). For a *kshatriya* there does not exist another greater good than war (legitimized) by *dharma*.

But if you do not fight this battle which is (called for) by *dharma*, then you will have given up your own *dharma* as well as glory, and you will incur sin.

Moreover, all beings will recount your eternal infamy. And for one who has been honored, infamy is worse than death.

The great chariot warriors will think of you as one who has refrained from battle through fear; having been once greatly respected by them, you will then be reduced to pettiness.

Those who are not favorably inclined toward you will speak many unutterable words, slandering your might. What, indeed, can be more painful than that?

Either, being slain, you will attain heaven; or being victorious, you will enjoy (i.e.rule) the earth. Therefore arise, intent on battle.

ED 423 174 ASIAN AND AFRICAN CIVILIZATIONS: COURSE DESCRIPTION, TOPICAL
OUTLINE, AND SAMPLE UNIT.
4 OF 4 COLUMBIA UNIV., NEW YORK, NY. ESTHER A. AND JOSEPH KLINGENSTEIN C...
BEATON, RICHARD A. 95 294P.

Jainism: Excerpts

Sources of Indian Tradition. Wm. T. de Bary, ed. New York: Columbia University Press, 1988.

"All Creation Groans Together in Torment"

Even clubs and knives, stakes and maces, breaking my limbs,
An infinite number of times I have suffered without hope.
By keen-edged razors, by knives and shears,
Many times I have been drawn and quartered, torn apart and skinned.
Helpless in snares and traps, a deer,
I have been caught and bound and fastened, and often I have been killed.
A helpless fish, I have been caught with hooks and nets;
An infinite number of times I have been killed and scraped, split and gutted.
A bird, I have been caught by hawks or trapped in nets.
Or held fast by birdlime, and I have been killed an infinite number of times
A tree, with axes and adzes by the carpenters
An infinite number of times I have been struck and beaten, split and filed....
Even afraid, trembling, in pain and suffering,
I have felt the utmost sorrow and agony....
In every kind of existence I have suffered
Pains that have scarcely known reprieve for a moment.

"Cheerfully Endure All Things"

If another insult him, the monk should not lose his temper,
For that is mere childishness -- a monk should never be angry.
If he hears words harsh and cruel, vulgar and painful,
He should silently disregard them, and not take them to heart.
Even if beaten he should not be angry, or even think sinfully,
But should know that patience is best, and follow the Law.
If someone should strike a monk, restrained and subdued,
He should think, "It might be worse -- I have not lost my life!"
If on his daily begging round he receives no alms he should not be grieved,
But think, "I have nothing today but I may get something tomorrow!"
When a restrained ascetic, though inured to hardship,
Lies naked on the rough grass, his body will be irritated,
And in full sunlight the pain will be immeasurable,
But still, though hurt by the grass, he should not wear clothes.
When his limbs are running with sweat, and grimed with dust and dirt
In the heat of summer, the wise monk will not lament his lost comfort.
He must bear it all to wear out his karma, and follow the noble, the supreme Law.
Until his body breaks up, he should bear the filth upon it.

THE FIVE GREAT VOWS (*MAHAVRATA*) OF THE JAIN MENDICANT

1. Non-harm (*ahimsa*):

   "I renounce all harm of living things, whether subtle or gross, whether movable or immovable. Nor shall I myself harm living things, nor cause others to do it, nor consent to it. As long as I live, I confess and blame, repent and exempt myself of these sins, in the thrice threefold way [acting, commanding, or consenting, in past, present, or future], in mind, speech, and body."

2. Speaking only the truth (*satya*):

   "I renounce all vices of lying speech arising from anger or greed or fear or mirth. I shall neither myself speak lies, nor cause others to speak lies, nor consent to the speaking of lies by others. As long as I live, I confess and blame, repent and exempt myself of these sins, in the thrice threefold way [acting, commanding, or consenting, in past, present, or future], in mind, speech, and body."

3. Not taking what is not freely given (*asteya*):

   "I renounce all taking of anything not given, either in a village or a town or a wood, either of little or much, of small or great, of living or lifeless things. I shall neither take myself what is not given, nor cause others to take it, not consent to their taking it. As long as I live, I confess and blame, repent and exempt myself of these sins, in the thrice threefold way [acting, commanding, or consenting, in past, present, or future], in mind, speech, and body."

4. Celibacy (*brahmacarya*):

   "I renounce all sexual pleasures, either with gods or humans or animals. I shall not give way to sensuality, nor cause others to do it, nor consent to their doing it. As long as I live, I confess and blame, repent and exempt myself of these sins, in the thrice threefold way [acting, commanding, or consenting, in past, present, or future], in mind, speech, and body."

5. Non-attachment (*aparigraha*):

   "I renounce all attachments, whether little or much, small or great, living or lifeless. Neither shall I myself form such attachments, nor cause others to do so, nor consent to their doing so. As long as I live, I confess and blame, repent and exempt myself of these sins, in the thrice threefold way [acting, commanding, or consenting, in past, present, or future], in mind, speech, and body."

The Parable of the Elephant and the Blind Men

It was six men of Indostan
To learning much inclined
Who went to see the elephant
(Though all of them were blind)
That each by observation
Might satisfy his mind.

The first approached the elephant
And happened to fall
Against his broad and sturdy side
At once began to bawl:
"Bless me! But the elephant
Is very like a wall."

The second, feeling of the tusk
Cried, "Ho! What have we here,
So very round and smooth and sharp?
To me 'tis mighty clear
This wonder of an elephant
Is very like a spear."

The third approached the animal,
And happened to take
The squirming trunk within his hands,
Thus boldly up and spake:
"I see", quoth he; "the elephant
Is very like a snake."

The fourth reached out his eager hand
And felt about the knee.
"What most this wondrous beast is like
Is mighty plain", quoth he;
"Tis clear enough the elephant
Is very like a tree."

The fifth, who chanced to touch the ear,
Said "E'en the blindest man
Can tell what this resembles most;
Deny the fact who can,
This marvel of an elephant
Is very like a fan."

The sixth no sooner had begun
About the beast to grope
Than seizing on the swinging tail
That fell within his scope,
"I see," quoth he, "the elephant
Is very like a rope."

And so these men of Indostan
Disputed loud and long,
Each in his own opinion
Exceeding stiff and strong,
Though each was partly in the right,
And all were in the wrong.

The Art of South and Southeast Asia, Part One: South Asia. New York:
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1994.

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Asoka's Rock Edicts
Sources of Indian Tradition. Ainslie T. Embree, ed. New York: Columbia
University Press, 1988.

From the Thirteenth Rock Edict

When the king, Beloved of the Gods and of Gracious (Appearance), had been consecrated eight years, Kalinga was conquered. 150,000 people were deported, 100,000 were killed, and many times that number died. But after the conquest of Kalinga, the Beloved of the Gods began to follow righteousness, to love righteousness, and to give instruction in righteousness. Now the Beloved of the Gods regrets the conquest of Kalinga, for when an independent country is conquered people are killed, they die, or are deported, and that the Beloved of the Gods finds very painful and grievous....

For all beings the Beloved of the Gods desires security, self-control, calm of mind, and gentleness. The Beloved of the Gods considers that the greatest victory is the victory of righeousness; and this he has won here.... Even where the envoys of the Beloved of the Gods have not been sent, men hear of the way in which he follows and teaches righteousness.... Thus he achieves a universal conquest, and conquest always gives a feeling of pleasure; yet it is but a slight pleasure, for the Beloved of the Gods only looks on that which concerns the next life as of great importance.

From a minor Rock Edict (Maski Version)

Thus speaks Asoka, the Beloved of the Gods. For two and a half years I have been an open follower of the Buddha, though at first I did not make much progress. But for more than a year now I have drawn closer to the (Buddhist) Order, and have made much progress. In India the gods who formerly did not mix with men now do so. This is the result of effort, and may be obtained not only by the great, but even by the small, through effort -- thus they may even easily win heaven.

Father and mother should be obeyed, teachers should be obeyed; pity ...should be felt for all creatures. These virtues of righteousness should be practices.... This is an ancient rule, conducive to long life.

From the First Rock Edict

Here no animal is to be killed for sacrifice.... Formerly in the Beloved of the Gods' kitchen several hundred thousand animals were killed daily for food; but not at the time of writing; only three are killed -- two peacocks and a deer, though the deer not regularly. Even these three animals will not be killed in the future.

From the Second Rock Edict

Everywhere in the empire of the Beloved of the Gods, and even beyond his frontiers...the Beloved of the Gods has provided medicines for man and beast. Wherever medicinal plants have not be found they have been sent there and planted. Roots and fruits have also been sent where they did not grow and have been planted. Wells have been dug along the roads for the use of man and beast.

From the Seventh Pillar Edict

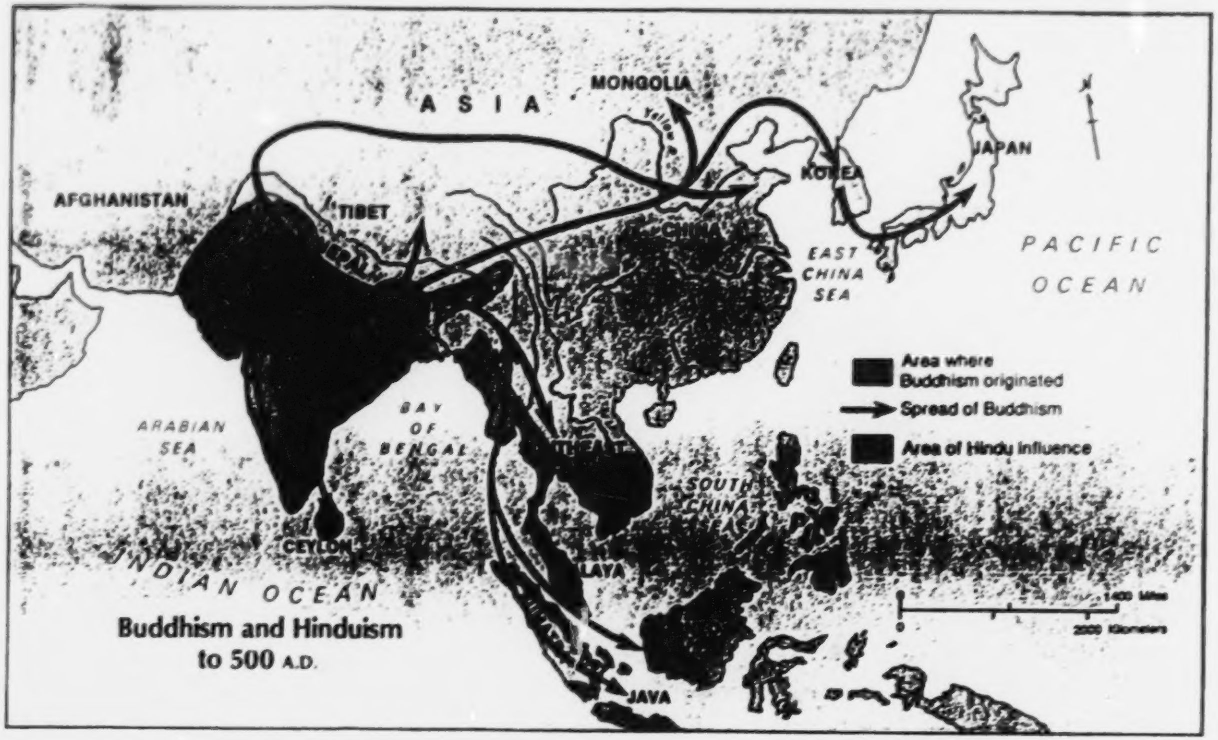
In the past, kings sought to make the people progress in righteousness, but they did not progress.... And I asked myself how I might uplift them through progress in righteousness.... Thus I decided to have them instructed in righteousness, and to issue ordinances of righteousness, so that by hearing them, the people might conform, advance in the progress of righteousness,and themselves make great progress....

Moreover, I have had banyan trees planted on the roads to give shade to man and beast; I have planted mango groves, and I have had ponds dug and shelters erected along the roads at every eight kos (about 16 miles). Everywhere I have had wells dug for the benefit of man and beast. But his benefit is but small, for in many ways the kings of olden time have worked for the welfare of the world; but what I have done has been done that men may conform to righteousness.

All the good deeds that I have done have been accepted and followed by the people. And so obedience to mother and father, obedience to teachers, respect for the aged, kindliness to brahmans and ascetics, to the poor and weak, and to slaves and servants have increased and will continue to increase.... And this progress of righteousness among men has take place in two manners, by enforcing conformity to righteousness, and by exhortation. I have enforced the law against killing certain animals and many others, but the greatest progress of righteousness among men comes from exhortation in favor of noninjury to life and abstention from killing living beings.

I have done this that it may endure...as long as the moon and sun and that my sons and my great-grandsons may support it; for by supporting it they will gain both this world and the next.

Ancient Asian Heritages, 600 B.C.-500 A.D.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Area where Buddhism originated
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Buddhism and Hinduism to 500 A.D.

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Basic Buddhist Iconography

The Buddha Image

elongated earlobes: a reminder of his princely origins.

ushnisha: the bulge on top of his head, symbolic of great wisdom.

urna: a knot on his forehead, symbolic of the third eye/omniscience.

short hair: a monk's style which distinguishes him from bodhisattvas and princes who typically wear their hair piled high in elaborate coiffures

simple monk's attire: again, distinguishes him from bodhisattvas and princes who wear more elaborate clothes and are generally bejeweled to remind that they are still in the world.

straight posture: standing or sitting, this reminds of the straight bodhi tree, under which Siddartha Gautama meditated and attained enlightenment (or awakening).

chakras (wheels/stylized lotus blossoms) on the palms of his hands and the soles of his feet: an "auspicious mark" from birth which prophesizes Buddha's turning of the wheel of enlightenment.

rings around the neck: another "auspicious sign" the symbolism of which I have not discovered! It is not intended to signal plumpness or wealth.

mudra: hand gesture which convey messages and is a part of the overall idiom of Buddhist and Hindu art throughout the region. Please see attached sheet for specific examples/explanations.